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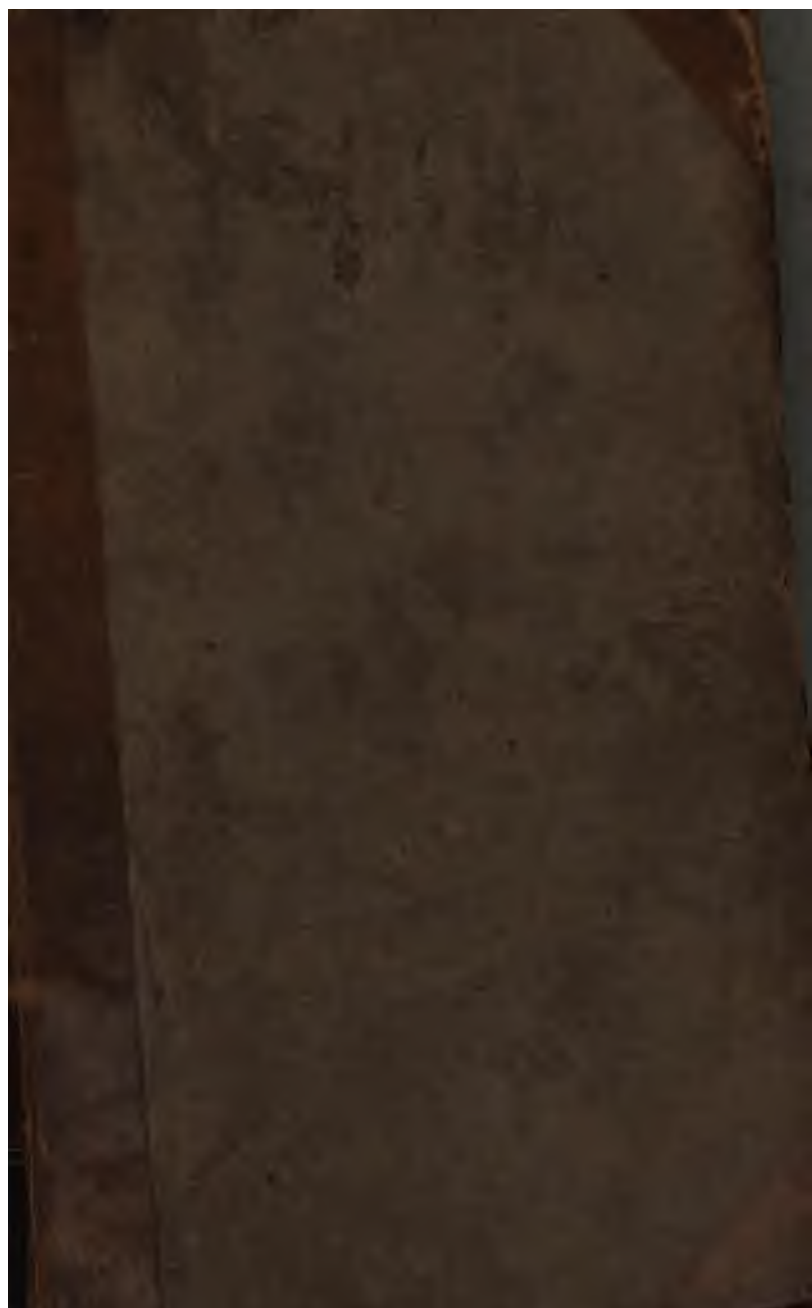
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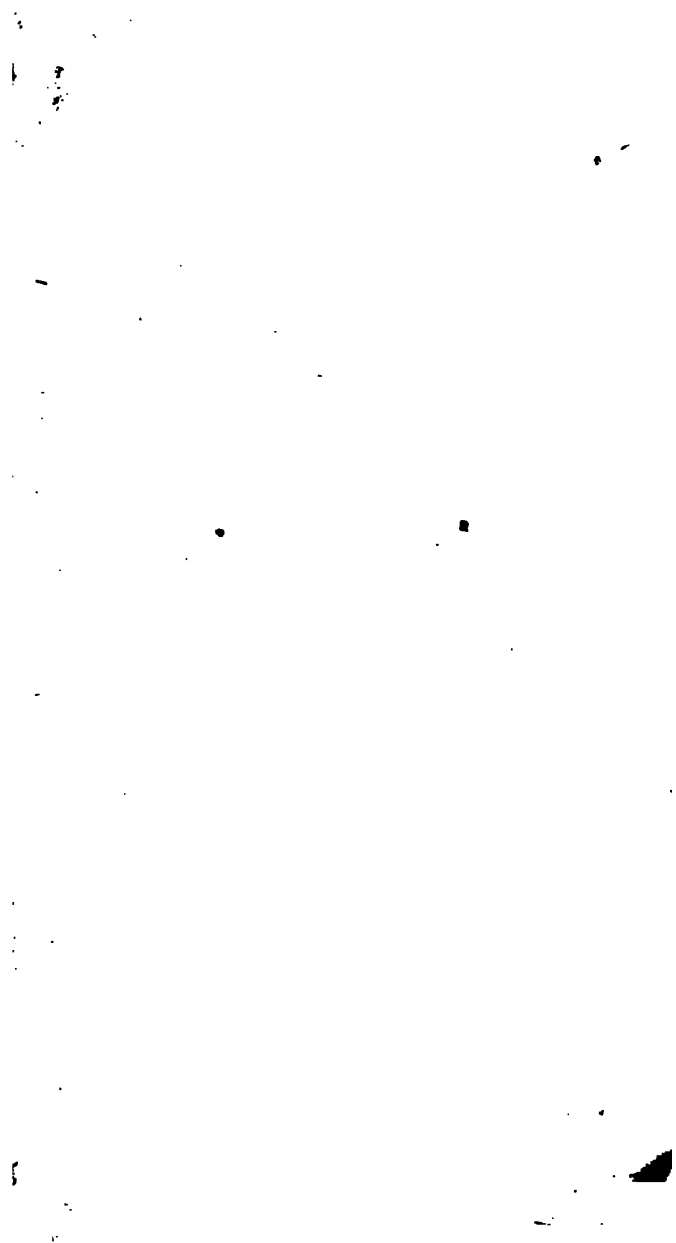
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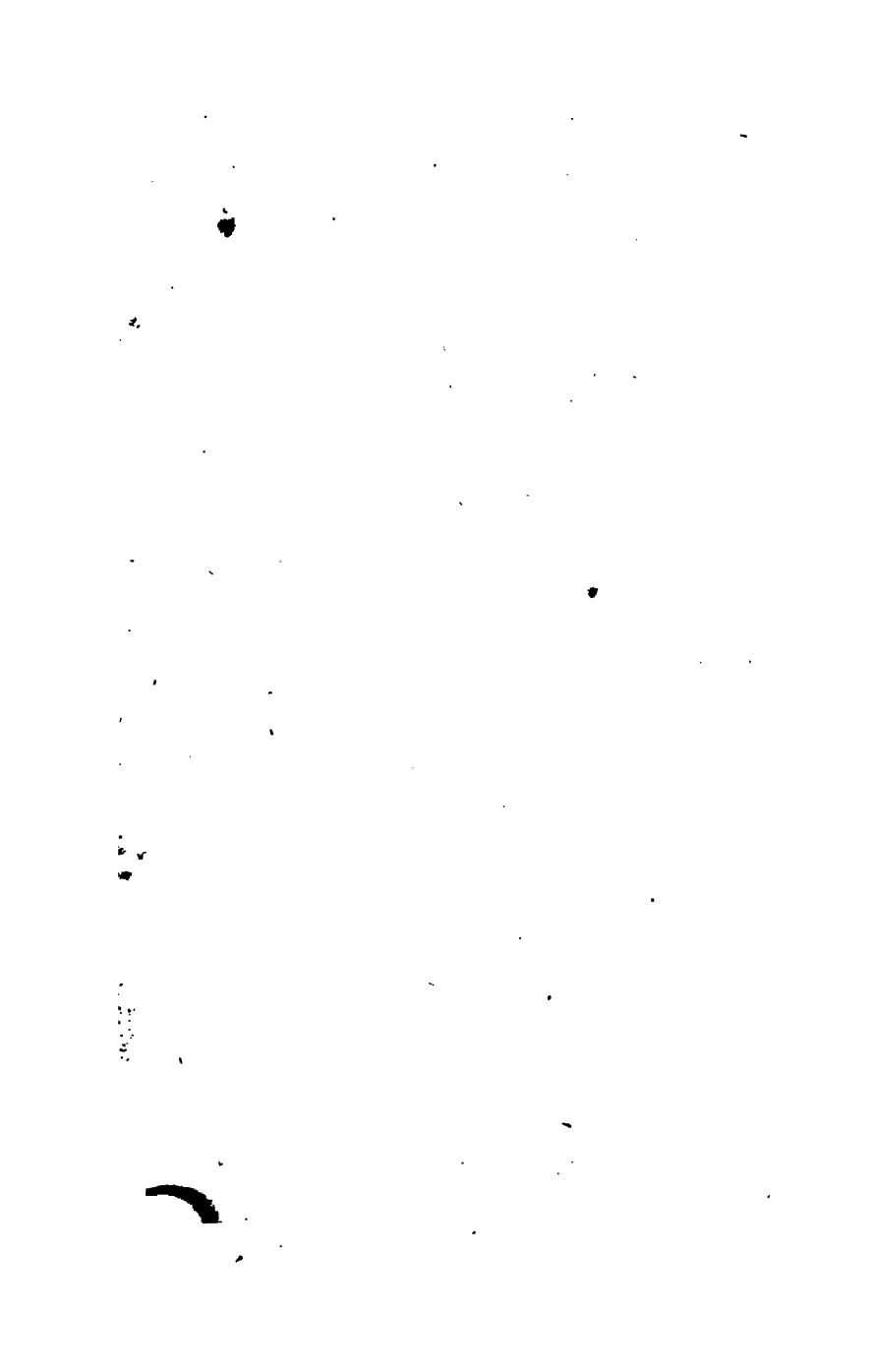
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THE HYPOCRITE.

A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.



THE
HYPOCRITE;

OR,

THE MODERN JANUS.

A Nobel.

— — — — —
IN FIVE VOLUMES.
— — — — —

BY
SELINA DAVENPORT.

So spake the false dissembler, unperceiv'd.
For neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heaven and earth :
And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems.

MILTON.

— — — — —
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THE
HYPOCRITE.

CHAP. I.

THE peace of Deloraine had received too severe a wound for him to derive much pleasure from any thing which could now happen to him. His uncle had introduced him to his relations, who all strove which should be most forward in testifying their regard to the son of their lamented Elizabeth. Parties were made expressly to amuse him, and nothing was undone that love and friendship could suggest, to wean him from his determination of retiring wholly from the world. Could any thing have turned

him from his purpose, it would have been the affectionate wishes of the duke of Fitz-Aubin, who urged, but vainly, the deprivation all who loved him would sustain by his total absence from London.

His uncle alone did not oppose the desire of his nephew. Fatigued by the duties of his profession, it had long been his intention to retire, and pass the remainder of his days in the calm tranquillity of the country; he had therefore purchased a most desirable residence, about fifty miles from London, in a county rich with a variety of romantic and picturesque views, and here he hoped to enjoy the society of his beloved nephew, who had, if possible, become still dearer to him, from his recent severe and heavy afflictions.

Deloraine had seen the newly-bought villa of doctor Bennet, and expressed his approbation of its situation—" Yet think not, my dear uncle," said he, " that either the beauty of our future residence,

dence, or the charm which dwells in your conversation and presence, will be able to fix my wandering inclinations. Deprived of her on whom my soul doted with no common passion, I feel the impossibility of my staying long in one place: a succession of new objects is absolutely necessary to my existence, or at least to my retaining my reason; but at every stage you shall hear from me; and, when I am weary of travelling from place to place, I shall return with increasing eagerness to the villa which contains my dear and revered uncle."

Although this plan of Deloraine's interfered with the domestic happiness of doctor Bennet, yet he made no attempt to dissuade him from it; on the contrary, he purposed sometimes to accompany him in his rambles. The generous duke likewise expressed a wish to be one of the party, and promised, at least *once* every year, to pass a month or two with his friend.

Conversing on the subject one day, in the presence of the duke, Deloraine said, while the ready tears started into his eyes—"Had my Althea been living, how would she have enjoyed this charming retreat of my uncle! formed for domestic felicity, she would have preferred such a residence to the most splendid mansion in town—ah, Fitz-Aubin, what can make amends for the loss of such a woman?"

The heart of the duke too well replied—"Not any thing."

The footman now entered, and delivered a letter to doctor Bennet. The arms on the seal betrayed the name of the noble writer. After he had read it, he said—"My dear Edmund, lord Mortimer is in London, and requests me to call on him."

"Lord Mortimer!" exclaimed Deloraine, starting from his seat, and pacing his chamber; "what can he have to communicate to you?—are we never to be

be free from his unwelcome civilities? For God's sake! my dear uncle, go to him, lest he should call on you. The sight of lord Mortimer would nearly deprive me of my senses!"

He flung himself by the side of the duke, who affectionately pressed his hand.

"Politeness obliges me to call on his lordship," replied the physician, "otherwise I should gladly excuse myself. He can have only *one thing* to consult with me upon."

"Deceive him not; the thing is impossible," cried Deloraine, considerably agitated; "never will I consent to enter a house which contains the illiberal destroyer of my happiness!—never, by Heaven! unless he could restore to me my Althea, or her infant!" Then ringing the bell, he ordered Jem to fetch immediately a post-chaise. "I will not remain in town another day," he continued, "lest I should be so unfortunate

as to light upon the murderer of my adored Althea: Let my departure convince the earl that my resolution is immoveable. I might forgive his injuries to *myself*, but I can never forget his unfeeling barbarity to my wife, in not seeing her, as she requested, and in refusing my child the mournful privilege of being entombed with its mother."

"My Edmund, my dear nephew, you shall no more be agitated by the notice of lord Mortimer: compose yourself, for our sakes—for mine and your friend. I will go to-day to the earl, and convince him that all his hopes are fruitless."

"Dear Deloraine," said the duke of Fitz-Aubin, "if you will leave town before your uncle, let me accompany you; we will go to —; it will be in the road to the villa, and your uncle can call for you as he passes on his journey. Countermand your orders for the chaise, as we may as well travel in one of mine."

Deloraine consented, and the worthy
doctor,

doctor, in the warmth of his gratitude, embraced the duke—"Excellent young man," said he, "what would my poor boy be without you!"

Jem was now ordered to pack up what things his master wanted, and to carry a note from the duke to Dupree, with the same orders, desiring also that his travelling-chariot might be sent at such an hour.

"I will dispense with his attendance," said the duke, "for I am unwilling to take him from his Cicely; they are so strongly attached to each other, that I mean to place them in a lucrative farm on the borders of one of my estates, which I purchased about two months ago: here they will be able to enjoy each other's constant society, and to see occasionally Homely Farm, which is only distant a few miles from my hunting-lodge. I shall flatter myself, Deloraine, that you will favour me sometimes with your company."

"Dear Fitz-Aubin, you and my worthy uncle possess all the affection this widowed heart can now bestow: yes, my noble friend, you shall see me; in August I shall travel that road. Perhaps also the same motive may lead you to accompany me?"

The duke's sigh echoed back that of his friend—"We are brothers in affection as well as in affliction," said his grace; "did I consult my own private inclinations, they would lead me to give up my town-residence altogether, and, like yourself, live wholly in the country: but my mother and sister have claims upon me which I cannot pass over without doing an injury to their affections, and meriting the accusation of ingratitude. It is a sufficient source of regret and uneasiness to the duchess to be assured that all her hopes are blighted of ever seeing me the father of a family. My cousin, a young man, who, has not
long

long since left the university, is my acknowledged heir to the dukedom."

Deloraine pressed the hand of the duke, then raising his eyes to heaven, he said—"Sweet spirit of our sainted Althea! it is to thy blest memory this sacrifice is offered. The heart that has once been sanctified by thy image, can never admit that of another."

Doctor Bennet, affected by the remembrance of the sorrowful accident, which had ~~thus~~ blasted the happiness of two amiable men, neither of whom was yet three-and-twenty, could not restrain the tear of affectionate sympathy: he embraced them both, exclaiming—"Ye were surely, my dear boys, born under the influence of the same friendly planets. Two such noble souls are scarcely to be met with in a man's life. I cannot help, however, entering into the disappointment of the duchess of Fitz-Aubin, who must feel most keenly the refined and romantic resolution of her only son."

"My mother's vexation," replied his grace, "is considerably lessened by one circumstance; the cousin, who, in case of my dying single, is heir to the title and estate, is the lover of my sister; they are to be married in a few weeks, and may God grant that nothing may occur to damp the ardour of their present attachment! Thus you see, my dear doctor, that the vow which I made never to marry, will add to the splendour of lady Sarah's establishment in life, and my beloved mother may yet live to fondle on her knee an infant duke of Fitz-Aubin."

Jem now returned with his grace's carriage: the friends, after taking some refreshment, took leave of the doctor, who, promising to follow them in the space of a week, now prepared to pay his unwilling visit to lord Mortimer.

Courteney and the children of the marchioness were with the earl in the drawing-room, when doctor Bennet was announced.

announced. His lordship immediately rose, and taking his hand, led him to a couch, placing himself by his side. Courteney, with all possible humility, bowed to the doctor, as he conducted his young pupils to their apartments, but he shrunk within himself as his eyes met the penetrating glance of the physician, who hardly deigned to return his salute.

The conference between the uncle of the injured Deloraine and the father of the deceased Countess was short and unsatisfactory to his lordship, who even entreated the doctor to use all his influence to do away the resentment of his nephew. He was no sooner informed of his sudden departure from London, and his uncle's conviction that such a reunion could never take place, than he broke forth into loud lamentations against his hard destiny, in being deprived of this his last hope and chief wish.

As soon as the doctor was gone, the

earl sent for Courteney, and imparted to him the result of his application.

“ Pardon me, my lord,” said the crafty dissembler, “ if I speak rather warmly of the obstinacy of my friend—my friend, indeed, he is no longer, since he has not condescended to write to me for many months : I always thought his pride and rash ambition would end in his ruin. I confess I feel angry with him for his insolence towards your lordship, who is all forgiveness and generosity.”

“ Ah, Courteney ! this haughty friend, whose conduct you so severely censure, (out of regard to myself, I am certain) is yet inexpressibly dear to me, as the child of her whom I have never ceased to remember with affection and bitter regret. I once thought that ambition made him become the husband of my lamented Althea ; yet that could not be the case, for I have offered to settle on him a handsome property, and to obtain for him

him a title if he wished it. His uncle only smiled at my weakness. 'The mind of Deloraine,' said he, 'soars above such trifles; love only influenced his choice; the spirit of Elizabeth speaks again in *him*.' Curse on my ancestral pride," continued his lordship, "that urged me to act contrary to the natural feelings of my heart, that deprived me of my only child—the darling of my soul, and for ever placed a bar between me and the son of Elizabeth Bennet!"

"His knowledge of who he is, and the advantages which result from that knowledge, contribute not a little to increase his usual high spirit. Trust me, my dear lord, that, in the course of a short time, you will rather rejoice that you are free from this arrogant and revengeful young man; and your peace will be more permanent, and your happiness more certain, in adopting lord Edwin, according to your first intention; in a few years he will be able to requite your kindness,
and

and repay, with interest, all your tenderness."

" You counsel wisely, Courteney ; since I must no longer cherish the delightful hope of Deloraine's acknowledging me as his father, of his soothing my declining years by his presence, and his fascinating eloquence, all my regard and attention shall be turned on Edwin. I would also, were it possible, retain you always as his tutor, director, and friend. The idea of parting from you gives me serious uneasiness ; and yet, Courteney, how can I selfishly wish to detain you for ever from your wife ? Can we not devise some plan to have her in the same house with you ? Is she capable of becoming governess to lady Caroline ? "

The bare mention of having his *wife* once more under the same roof with himself, to be a spy over his actions, and to restrain his licentiousness, was a death-blow to Courteney's plans. Every remain of conjugal or paternal feeling faded

faded before this fatal goodness of lord Mortimer.

Trembling with apprehension, and sick with the fear of not succeeding, the cold-blooded hypocrite thus replied to the generous wishes of the earl—

“This last proof of your lordship’s kindness completely overpowers me. Excuse me, my lord, if my feelings, and the deep sense I have of your undiminished bounty and benevolence, render me incapable of giving utterance to my unbounded gratitude. Oh! my lord, your generous desire to make me happy calls for my candid confession of my real situation. What your lordship proposes as the means to ensure my comforts, would totally deprive me of them—would, in short, render me as wretched as I was before I had the good fortune to enter your family.”

Lord Mortimer looked all attention and curiosity.

Courteney continued—“It has been my
chief

chief misfortune, my lord, to be married to a woman whose infirmities of temper were but too well known to all but myself; her constant ill-humour, her causeless jealousies, her unbounded extravagance, has been the source of all my miseries, and gave birth to the idea of seeking for that peace from home which had become a stranger to my bosom. Since my residence in this house, I have tasted repose and happiness—as much, at least, as a mind like mine, fond of domestic tranquillity and conjugal tenderness, can enjoy under the deprivations of both.” Here he affected to turn aside and wipe away the tear of bitter remembrance.

“Dear Courteney,” said the earl, “I am sorry for you, on my soul; who would have thought that a man like you, famed for moderation, piety, and every just principle, should be so unfortunate as not to reclaim the violent spirit of your wife? You, no doubt, used all your eloquence to convince her of her error,

error, and even now do not suffer her to want any of the necessaries of life? You say she is extravagant; I will increase your salary myself, lest she should make her wants a plea to disturb you by her applications."

"Oh, my lord!" said Courteney, pressing the hand of the earl to his lips, "my whole life I willingly devote to your service. All I ask is, that I may be so blest as to end my days under your roof."

"It is my wish also, Courteney; and since you are so unfortunate in your dearest connexions, we will do all we can to make you regret as little as possible your misfortunes; here is fifty pounds, which I will give you every half year; this, added to the salary of the marchioness, will enable you to make your wife contented, perhaps, in your absence, and yourself to appear as you have hitherto done—nor shall this be all; the marquis, in thirteen years, will
be

be of age ; the gratitude of his nature, as well as that of his brother, will teach him to provide handsomely for the man who sacrificed the best part of his life to the welfare and happiness of him and Edwin : before that period, however, I shall hope to have you a fixed resident with myself. But say, Courteney, can I not do something for your children ?”

“ As yet, they are too young, my lord ; their mother would deem herself highly injured were I to attempt to take them from her, and as she is able to give them their first instructions, I am unwilling to deprive her of them.”

“ Certainly—you are right ; God forbid that I should be the means of separating a mother from her children ; when they are old enough, we will see what can be done for their future good. In the mean time, my worthy Courteney, amidst all my heavy afflictions, I may reckon upon having you always at hand

to

to sooth and comfort my mind, whenever it is agitated by the severe remembrance of the past."

Thus far Courteney had gained his point: the cruel and cowardly falsehoods he had uttered against his mild, patient, and unoffending wife caused him no uneasiness; by these he had hindered her from partaking of the comforts he himself enjoyed, and shut her out for ever from receiving the personal kindness of the earl or his amiable sister. His children also were included with their proscribed mother, and, as being *hers*, were doomed to endure their father's neglect, and want of common affection. Yet, in his great liberality, he determined to call on Sybella, and give her *ten* pounds out of the *fifty* he had just received.

There was no company that day at the marchioness's; he therefore, as was usual, latterly, dined with the family, and partook of every delicacy the season afforded; nor did the probability of his unoffending

feeding wife and innocent children being without that necessary meal, ever disturb the philosophy of his mind, or the serenity of his countenance.

Sybella and Maria were sitting down to tea for the *third* time, the second had been their dinner, when a loud knock at the door of their lodging (they had no longer a house) alarmed them.

"My God!" exclaimed Mrs. Courteney, "I hope that is not the lady for the caps; I was in hopes I should have been able to redeem them before now."

"Perhaps it is the generous Deloraine," said Maria, "who has found out our new abode; if so, we shall be able to make good our credit."

Steps now advanced to their room—"Open the door, Leopold," said Sybella to her eldest boy.

The child obeyed, and screamed out with joy—"It is my father!—it is my father, mother!—you will now be able to get the caps!"

Sybella

Sybella flew forward, trembling with surprise and pleasure—"Oh, my dear husband, Heaven has sent you to my relief! How long have you been in town?—how did you find us out?"

Courteney cast an unquiet look around the humble apartment. The elegance of his dress, and handsome gold watch in his pocket, but ill accorded with the scenery around him. After answering the questions of Sybella, he inquired why she had given up the house, and taken such miserable apartments?

"Because," hastily replied Maria, who had caught a glimpse of the gold chain and seals of her brother-in-law, "my sister was unable, from our scanty earnings, to pay the rent, and to support her children: we work day and night, yet I fear we shall not pay for these rooms long, bad as they are."

Sybella gave her a look to be silent; then taking the treacherous hand of her husband, she said—"Amidst all my difficulties,

faculties, I rejoice, Leopold, to see you look well and happy; it is a comfort to know *that*. Indeed, my dear Courteney, I strove hard—very hard, and so did Maria, to keep the little box over our heads; but we were disappointed several times in receiving money, and we found it impossible to pay the rent: we were compelled to steal away by night; and every rap I hear alarms me, lest it should be our landlord, who is, you know, a very severe man: my greatest fear, however, is, that he should find you out, and call for the money.”

This was of more consequence, to Courteney than the sufferings of his family. He inquired what was due to him, and desired to look over the bills which they owed. Little Leopold ran to the box to find them, then clung round the neck of his mother, sobbing with pleasure.

“Dearest mother,” said the boy, “now my father is come back, we shall have meat again for our dinner; we shall
not

not see you cry because you cannot give us always some butter to our bread."

Here was an artless appeal to the paternal feelings of Courteney, had he possessed any. Frowning sternly, he bade the child hold his tongue, as he put him out in his reckoning, and then coolly went on in his calculations. After he had done, he said, with cutting indifference—"The sum is more than I had imagined, Sybella, and only shows, as usual, your bad management. I really cannot perceive that you and Maria have killed yourselves with your close confinement to your needles. It appears that you have run, together with the rent, nearly thirty pounds in debt—and how I am to pay it I know not."

"How much larger would have been the sum, brother," cried Maria, indignantly, "had *you* been at home! Many and many is the day that we have sat down to a single mutton-chop and potatoes, and thought it an excellent dinner, compared

compared to our usual one of tea. You, brother, would not have been so contented, and yet you think we have managed badly, and lived too profusely."

"I think you are very impertinent, Miss; but perhaps your sister has been schooling you against my arrival."

"My sister——"

"Dearest Matilda, be silent," said Sybella; "I seek no redress from human aid: Leopold well knows that had we received the small remittances he promised us before he went out of town, these trifling bills would not now have been unpaid."

"I see," said he, angrily, "that nothing will satisfy you but my quitting the situation I now hold, and returning once more to our former poverty and disgrace; you are only envious that I live rather better than you do, and that I am obliged to go genteelly dressed, without remembering the continual fatigue and drudgery of my employment."

"Heaven

"Heaven knows my heart," fervently exclaimed the weeping Sybella, "that deeply as I feel our separation, yet I would not have you return to our wretchedness, I would not deprive you of a single comfort you enjoy; no, Leopold, you cannot do better than remain where you are, until we are enabled to come together again, under more favourable circumstances. If you are just to me, you will confess that I have seldom troubled you for money. I know that you must keep up a genteel appearance—indeed that you always did at home, for it was my pride to see you look like a gentleman; but surely, my dear Leopold, you might contrive to assist us now and then with a trifle. I do not wish to wound your feelings, but I assure you that Maria and I injure our healths by our constant application to work. The pay is small when we get it, and we are compelled frequently to live on tea for whole days together: yet think not for

a moment that I wish you to be a partaker of our scanty fare. Maria and the boys can witness that it is my constant cry, 'Thank God, your father is better provided for—thank God, he does not know the extent of our sufferings!'

This was the woman whom Courteney had represented to lord Mortimer as a being wholly destitute of those qualities which could render his home bearable—this was the woman whom he could, without a sigh, deprive of every comfort, and from whose chaste tenderness he fled, as if the circle of her arms contained a subtle poison that endangered his life.

The possibility that their former landlord might discover his present residence, and the unpleasant consequences which would thereby arise to *himself*, determined Courteney to pay the rent and discharge the bills. This extraordinary stretch of generosity did not arise from any pity or tenderness, to which the distressed

pressed appearance of his wife and family might justly be supposed to have given birth; self, in this, as well as in every other instance, regulated the actions of the HYPOCRITE; he remembered that dearly as he loved money, yet it would be advisable to part from it under the present circumstances, lest any of the urgent creditors, by calling on him for the payment of their bills, should disgrace him in the estimation of lord Mortimer or his family.

After seeming to be in deep thought for some minutes, during which not a movement occurred to disturb his meditations, he drew from his pocket-book three ten-pound notes, saying, in a voice ill calculated to enhance the merit of the gift—"Here, Sybella, is thirty pounds, to pay the rent and bills: let me have the receipts sent me by the post. In giving you this, I shall greatly distress myself, and must break in to my next quarter's salary. You will now be free
c 2
from

from any terrors, and must do the best you can for the future. It will not be in my power to let you have any more for a considerable time, therefore do not depend on me."

Sybella and Maria were indeed most agreeably surprised by this unexpected relief; yet it still left them without a shilling in the world; the poor children were in want of clothes, and the caps would remain unredeemed.

"Be sure you let me have the receipts, Sybella, for I should not be best pleased were these bills to be presented to me again."

"Good Heavens! my dear Leopold, how could you suppose that I would act so imprudently? It is true, our present distress is great; it has compelled me to pledge some caps, which I daily expect to have sent for, and we are all in want of a change of apparel; yet I should be very loth to let my necessities, however urgent they may be, lead me to
apply

apply any of this money to other purposes than what it was intended for. Perhaps, Leopold, you have some cast-off clothes which I can make up for the boys?"

"I am obliged (unless I would be called mean) to give them to the manservant that attends me," replied Courteney: "my salary is small," (such at least he wished her to believe;) "and if I appear like a gentleman, I must be liberal to some of the domestics, who would not otherwise be so willing to serve me."

Sybella sighed deeply as she saw the torn shoes of her little boys, while the blush of anger tinged the *now* pale cheek of her sister, whose quickness of comprehension too well informed her of the selfish motives which had wrung from her brother so large a sum. She longed to give vent to her indignation, but affection for Sybella made her restrain her feelings. Courteney, however, read in her eyes her thoughts on his conduct,

and as he knew them to be true, he made his visit as short a one as he could.

"Let us at least see you sometimes, Leopold; though, I confess, our present residence but ill agrees with the apartments you are now accustomed to live in, still it will be some comfort to us to see you now and then."

"When I have an evening to myself, you may be certain I will pass it with you," replied Courteney; "but I fear that I shall be more confined than ever, since the marchioness will now begin to receive company."

Both himself and Sybella purposely avoided mentioning the name of the lovely injured countess, as it would necessarily bring up that of the betrayed Deloraine.

Rising to depart, he carefully examined his dress, lest it should have received any dirt; and brushing off with his hand some dust on his coat-sleeve, he was about to take leave, when his eldest boy running

to

to kiss him, said—"Have you got a penny, father, to give us for cakes? it is a long while since we have had a cake."

Again discomposed, Courteney hastily felt in his pocket, and unwillingly drew out sixpence, which he gave to the overjoyed boy.

Maria, who owed him a grudge, admired his chain and seals—"Are they gold, Leopold?" said she, examining them—"yes, as I live, they are! Let us see your watch, brother."

"It is a present from the earl," said the hypocrite; "given me before I left town."

"It is very handsome, indeed, Leopold," cried both sisters, "and must have cost no small sum."

"No, truly," replied Maria; "the worth of this watch, chain, and seals, would make us free and happy, Sybella."

Courteney, impatient to be gone, hastily put up the watch, which he had himself bought, before he went down to the

Castle ; and bidding them good-night, hurried from the scene of domestic distress to the habitation of Miss Heartless, the *ci-devant* friend of his wife.

“ Come, Betsey,” said he, embracing her, “ let us be merry to-night ; here, take this note, and fetch me some brandy ; and let us have a chicken and asparagus for supper. I have just come from visiting my wife, and want some brandy to raise my spirits.”

“ And I want some new silk-stockings, Leo ; so you are just come in time to buy them for me.”

“ Well, Betsey, go and get what I bid you ; be a good girl, and I will see what I can do for you.”

The brandy was soon procured, and Leopold swallowed several bumpers, to excite exhilaration, while the caresses and well-timed fondness of his favourite were rewarded by a present, which would not, under any other circumstances, have been obtained so easily.

Thus

Thus was that money expended which would have filled the hungry stomachs of his neglected family, and clothed the limbs of his deserted children, whose little hearts were even made lighter by the sixpence their unfeeling father had been *compelled* to give them.

After Courteney had so eagerly hastened from the humble abode of his wife, and the poor boys were put to bed, and asleep, Maria said—"Were you to be advised by me, Sybella, you would, in spite of the dread of Leopold's anger, appropriate five pounds of this money to relieve us from our present difficulties. Think how dangerous it may prove to our future maintenance, should the caps not be forthcoming when they are sent for! Five pounds will at this moment be of the utmost importance to us; it will not only redeem the caps, but some of our clothes, which are absolutely wanted, before we can carry home our work. It will buy the dear boys some
c.5 shoes,

shoes, and enable us to recruit our constitutions by some decent meals."

"Oh! do not tempt me, Maria; I own the truth of what you say; but I fear the resentment of Leopold, if all the receipts are not sent him; besides, should I keep back five pounds, how can I make it good again?—had I any expectation of receiving such a sum, I grant that the severe deprivations we endure would tempt me, for your sake and my poor boys, to act against my given word."

"I will manage the matter, if you will leave it to my guidance," replied Maria.

"Both the butcher and baker would be quite satisfied were they to be paid a part of their money, and the remainder as we can let them have it. To-morrow I will go and pay the rent, and settle the accounts, so as to contrive, my dear sister, for us to obtain some advantage from this unexpected relief."

Morning came, and Sybella most unwillingly saw her sister prepare for her walk;

walk; she however remembered that her boys would gain new shoes by this arrangement, and that poor Maria would redeem enough of her things to make a more respectable appearance. With a heavy heart, she sat down to her work, while her eldest boy fetched his book. In the midst of his reading, she heard a double rap at the street-door; and as her mind still dwelt on the caps, she started up to see who it was.

Going down a few stairs, she could just discern a tall, genteel, elderly man, who, in a voice of benevolent sweetness, inquired if Mrs. Courteney lived there? Being informed she did, he requested to speak to her, and the woman of the house immediately called down the trembling Sybella. The gentleman, politely bowing, gave into her hand a letter, which he said had been delivered to him by a friend of hers, who was out of town, and who had requested him to convey it safe into her care. He then wished her good-morning, with an expression of
c 6 countenance

countenance which affected the agitated Sybella. She hurried to her chamber, and quickly broke the seal of Deloraine's letter.

Its contents re-animated her enfeebled body, and falling on her knees by the side of her children—"Pray with me, my dear boys," she exclaimed; "pray for the health and happiness of our guardian angel, our benefactor, our generous Deloraine!"

Maria, on her return, was surprised to see the face of her sister enlivened by a smile—"I have succeeded, Sybella," said she, "in gaining time from the butcher and baker; I have paid the rent and other bills; here are the receipts, the caps, and two of our gowns; and here is a joint of meat, which we have not seen for many a long day. Please God, we will all enjoy ourselves now, and work the harder for it to-morrow. Here, you little cubs, here are some cakes for you."

"And we *will* enjoy ourselves, Maria," cried her sister, smiling through her tears of rapturous gratitude. "We will
dine

dine first, and then you shall go back and pay the whole of the two bills, and Leopold shall have the receipts to-night."

"How's this, my dear Sybella?" inquired Maria; "are you serious?—who has been here, that you are thus enabled to pay five pounds, who had not, until my return, a shilling?"

"I can not only pay five, but ten, were it necessary," said Sybella: "but I wont keep you any longer in suspense; read, Maria—read the letter of our benevolent, our steady friend."

Maria hastily pressed the letter to her lips, then blushing, read aloud, in a trembling voice, its contents:

"My dear friends must not think, from my long silence, that I have forgotten them. Their removal was the principal cause of what I hope will not be deemed neglect. All my efforts, until yesterday evening, have been fruitless, to find out their present residence.
I would

I would have called, but am obliged suddenly to leave town.

“ My uncle will himself convey this into your hands. Accept the enclosed, my dear Sybella and Maria, from an old and faithful friend, who requests that, should any thing occur to make the assistance of such a one necessary, you will oblige him by conferring on him the honour of serving you to the utmost of his power. As I shall be anxious to learn how you are, during my absence from town, which may be for some months, I shall tax your time and good-nature, my dear Maria, and claim you for a correspondent. Take care that you do not give me cause to remind you that the well-known excuse of ladies in general (want of time) will not be accepted by your sincere and affectionate friend,

“ EDMUND DELORAINE.”

Maria's heart beat quick with a delight long unknown to her. She would have kissed again and again the letter of Deloraine,

loraine, but that the presence of her sister restrained her.

“Here, Maria,” said the neglected wife of Courteney, “is the kind present of our generous friend. Alas, Maria! when shall we be able to repay his kindness or his money?” She then shewed the overjoyed girl two five-pound notes. “I shall be able to keep my word with Leopold,” continued his wife, “and still gratify the wishes of my sister.”

“Noble Deloraine!” exclaimed Maria, unable any longer to conceal her feelings; “how could my brother turn traitor to such a friend—such an angel as he is!”

“Do not touch upon that subject, Maria, I entreat you; as you love *me*, spare my husband, whose conduct, I acknowledge with deep regret, will not bear scrutiny. I may be wrong in concealing from him the kindness of Edmund, but my motive is a good one. I
would

would not wound his feelings by acquainting him that all our comforts now flow from the man he unjustly conceives his enemy."

Maria, unwilling to damp the pleasure of her sister, forbore to mention the too glaring vices of her husband. They sat down to what had long been a stranger to them, a good joint of meat and other necessities; and though they were constrained to drink the health of Deloraine in their beer, yet the wish was nevertheless a pure one, and the tear of affectionate gratitude, which mingled with it, testified the sincerity of their hearts.

After returning thanks to God for his unexpected mercy in affording them such joyful relief in their worst extremity, Maria proceeded to the shops, in order to discharge the remainder of the two bills. Pleased by her readiness to pay, as well as with her interesting appearance, the tradesmen volunteered to serve.

serve them again ; but unfortunately their present abode was too far distant. From thence she called at the grocer's, and ordered in a quantity of rice, tea, sugar, and other necessaries, which would prevent their suffering the horrors of want, for some time at least. After buying her little nephews their new shoes, she returned to her sister, each feeling a serenity of mind, and a delightful hope of still seeing better days, through their own exertions, and the friendly assistance of Deloraine.

Courteney, meanwhile, was perplexed and disturbed both in body and mind, yet *they* were innocent of his troubles. Had his whole family been annihilated, it would not have cost him half the uneasiness which he now felt from the artless reproaches and tears of Susan ; he had deluded her on from week to week, with fresh excuses for his violating his solemn promise of marrying her. Fond of him to an excess, she suffered herself still to credit

credit his professions of attachment; (though, in reality, he was now grown tired of her,) until the certainty of her becoming a mother emboldened her to be more urgent. Under pretence of not being able to enjoy enough of her society, he got her to consent to quit lady Wilmington's secretly, assuring her that he would place her under the care of a relation, where she should remain until after her confinement.

Poor Susan had no alternative but to yield to the base design of her seducer; accordingly, she left the family one night, and with a heart bursting with remorse and penitence, hastened to the asylum which Courteney had prepared for her. Her absence was soon known. She had taken with her the whole of her little wardrobe; and the marchioness, distressed beyond measure, sent servants in every direction to trace out her retreat. Shocked at their fruitless attempts, she conjured Courteney to devise some plan

plan by which the poor girl who had thus clandestinely stolen from her protection might be recovered. The artful hypocrite appeared to sympathize in her distress; threw out hints that she must have been decoyed away by some lover; and volunteered to make every search himself for the fugitive. f

Exulting in the success of his plan, he called at the house which concealed his victim; it was situated in a retired part of Chelsea, and the woman to whose care he had confided the innocent daughter of the hospitable farmer, was one of those who deemed virtue but a starving commodity.

Susan met him with tears and sobs, which even his fresh protestations of love and fidelity could not restrain. She, on her knees, implored him to marry her, and not to bring shame and disgrace on her dear father and mother, who would never survive the knowledge of her dishonour. Courteney, tired of her person,

son,

son, and vexed at her importunities, at last resolved to acknowledge himself once more a married man, thinking by this to silence her entreaties and her hopes.

Susan heard him with a stare of wild incredulity—"You be jesting wi I, Mr. Courteney, sure now!—oh, why do you mock my distress?—why do you wish me to believe you could be so great a villain?"

"Dearest Susan, forgive my deception; it was my unbounded love for you that made me say I was single. But why do you start from me, my own Susan? I shall love you ten times the more for not bearing the hated name of wife, the sound of which would be quite sufficient to make me fly from you for ever."

Susan fell lifeless on the floor at the feet of her destroyer; who, rather alarmed, called for his companion in wickedness. With difficulty they restored her. Turning her eyes on Courteney, she said—
"Oh! how I once loved you, cruel man!"

How

How can you sleep in your bed, and know how basely you have sought my ruin? Dear father! dear mother! never—never will you see your Susan again!”

Courteney endeavoured to sooth her; he felt alarmed lest she should return either to the marchioness or to the farm, and discover his villany.

“Hold your false tongue,” said she; “perjured man, you who could so solemnly swear to make me your wife, well knowing that you had one living!—you have broken your oath, but I will keep mine. Go, go away from me—I no longer love you; but I will never perjure myself; I said I would not betray you, and I never will! my death, I hope, will put an end to all my injuries”

She persevered in not letting him embrace her. Angry at her obstinacy, yet deeming it wise to attempt at least to recover his influence over her; he left some money with the woman, and promised to call again in a day or two.

A week,

A week, however, elapsed before he was able to keep his word; he then found her recovering from a miscarriage; pale and miserable, yet still persisting in refusing every offer of reconciliation. They parted in anger; and when next he visited the place of her retreat, he learnt that she was gone, and the woman of the house was wholly ignorant of her fate.

“Stubborn fool! she deserves to starve for her obstinacy,” was the humane ejaculation of this man of morality and religion. Nor did he suffer the philosophical apathy of his feelings to be disturbed by the real distress of lady Wilmington, or the agonies of the worthy rustics her parents, who, when informed of the mysterious elopement of their child, gave way to bitter lamentations and reproaches, for suffering her to go to such a sad place as London.

The well-managed sorrow and tender condolence of Courteney only rendered
him

him more revered by them; and they thus unconsciously received again into their house, once the abode of peace and genuine happiness, the sole author of their misery, and the base and cowardly destroyer of the innocent and too-confiding Susan.

CHAP. II.

LORD Edwin was now the declared favourite of his uncle, who made no scruple in avowing his determination of making his fortune equal to that of the marquis, his brother. In order, therefore, that his nephews might receive every advantage from the talents of the best masters, in the ornamental branches of education, the earl consented to pass the winter months in London, dividing the remainder of the year between visits to the
Castle.

Castle, the Wilderness, or some fashionable watering-place.

Time, which blunts the keen remembrance of irremediable evils, softened down the poignancy of lord Mortimer's grief at the loss of his only child. All his affections, all his hopes and fond desires, were now fixed on the second son of his sister, who, he flattered himself, would realize, both in person and mind, all his sanguine expectations.

Never did youth hold out a brighter promise of the most finished manhood than that of lord Edwin : gifted by nature with a face and form which instantly captivated, from the sweet expression of the one, and the graceful symmetry of the other, lord Edwin became the idol of his relations, and the favourite of all the dependants. Affectionate, gentle, humane, and benevolent, he paid implicit obedience to the will of Courteney, whom, next to his uncle, he revered and loved, and who strove, with all imaginable.

ginable perseverance, to lay the foundation, in the yielding mind of his pupil, for all those vices which he himself possessed: he however, from prudential motives, taught him to look up to the earl with veneration and affection—to consider his word as a law, which it would be sacrilege to violate—and to remember that the disposal, not of his affections, but his hand, rested solely with his uncle.

Lord Edwin listened, believed, and obeyed; but his heart remained untainted by the contaminating counsels of his tutor, who his good-nature induced him to think was sometimes led away by mere tenderness for himself.

The marquis continued to retain the same spirit of independance, which led him to spurn at control, and to rebel against all attempts to contradict his opinions or to thwart his inclinations. He, nevertheless, had a sincere regard for Courteney, who soon perceived that

little was to be gained by opposing the wishes of his resolute pupil, and therefore desisted from the continuance of a system which could only end in making the marquis his enemy—a thing certainly to be avoided, even at the expence of every just and honourable feeling.

As soon as the marchioness's sons were old enough to be sent to the university, it was the wish of lord Mortimer that Courteney should accompany them, and, by his presence and advice, restrain, in some degree, the freedom of their actions. This arrangement was particularly pleasing to the hypocrite; he could now pursue the bent of his own vicious propensities, without fear of having his conduct made known to his liberal benefactor.

“My dear Courteney,” said the earl, “thank God; my nephews are now arriving at a time of life when the exertion of your talents will be no longer necessary. You will be exempt from the
fatigue

fatigue and drudgery of teaching the young, only to take upon you a new office—that of being companion to a peevish and querulous old man.”

“Oh, my lord! you are unjust to yourself,” replied Courteney. “Granting that you were arrived at that age when the disposition of man too frequently changes for the worse, yet I am confident the society of your lordship will never fail to charm. I look forward with joy to the period you speak of, when I shall be at liberty to devote to you the whole of my time, and, I trust, to prove, in a small degree, my gratitude and reverence for the many favours I have received from your lordship’s inexhaustible benevolence.”

“All that you have received, Courteney,” said the earl, “falls short of your deserts. Already have you passed ten years of your life in my family, and fulfilled, to the satisfaction of myself and lady Wilmington, the important duties of

your trust. If the marquis is not so tractable and docile as Edwin, the fault is in his own headstrong nature, not in you, whose sole endeavour has been to render him as perfect as his brother."

"I almost regret," he continued, "that the marchioness has remained single for so many years, since the authority of a father, properly exerted, might have in some measure tamed the high spirit of her eldest son. It is now too late to try such a remedy; but I rather think, Courteney, between ourselves, that her ladyship will not remain a widow many months longer. The persevering constancy of lord St. Laurence will at last overcome the resolution of my sister, and I shall rejoice should such an event take place, his lordship being, as you know, one of my most highly-esteemed friends."

Courteney likewise felt pleased at the probability of such a change, since it would, by separating the earl occasionally

ally from his sister, throw him more into the power of himself; and he doubted not but that he should, by studying more than ever the temper and pursuits of lord Mortimer, and by rendering himself almost necessary to his existence, not only receive a considerable salary, but be handsomely remembered by him in his will. This was of moment to Courteney, who, in the common order of things, had a right to calculate upon outliving the earl many years.

Another of his wishes was now soon gratified; lady Wilmington, who had long esteemed the friend of her brother, yielded to their united persuasions, and became the wife of the earl of St. Laurence, just before her sons, with their tutor, set off for Oxford.

This match gave satisfaction to all who were attached to the marchioness, and to her own family in particular. They had long been accustomed to love the object of her choice, and it seemed perfectly
D 3 natural

natural to her children to call by the endearing name of father, the man whom they had been in the habit of seeing constantly, and always with pleasure.

Courteney prepared to accompany his pupils to the university with fresh increase of spirits. Three years was deemed sufficient to finish their studies—three years, and he should no longer be confined in his hours or in his pleasures. From being a tutor, he should rise to be the companion, the acknowledged friend and favourite of lord Mortimer. Such a distinction was worth the sacrifice of some of the best years of his life: it would repay him for his tedious confinement, and the constant restraint he had been compelled to put on his words and actions for so long a time. It would also give him more consequence in the world; and he should have at last the delight of leading the lazy life of a gentleman, which had ever been the summit of his wishes.

In

In quitting London for the university, he had no single regret. His wife and family he had long since entirely abandoned; he was even ignorant of their existence, and had reported to lord Mortimer that death had dissolved him from the bonds of his unfortunate marriage. The circumstances which led to this total desertion and infamous brutality were as follow.

Two years elapsed, after he had given to Sybella the thirty pounds, during which period they never received any assistance from him; yet both his wife and sister struggled hard to remain where they were, and to live a little comfortably, by dint of constant exertion. Maria had written occasionally to Deloraine, who, not always being with his uncle when her letters arrived, did not receive them sometimes until a week after their date: he then never failed to reply to them, always begging her to tax his friendship to the utmost, were it necessary, and generally enclosing a present for the

D 4

children

children of his perfidious enemy. Such conduct made the sisters feel delicate in writing too often, and they determined that nothing but the most urgent necessity should compel them to draw upon his goodness for a relief, which they were so well convinced they should receive.

It however happened that the three boys fell sick of the measles, while Courteney was with his pupils at the Castle; and as they had it very badly, and required more delicate living than usual, Sybella wrote to her husband, requesting his assistance towards supporting them under their heavy illness. He replied to her letter—that he had no money to send her, and disliked applying to lady Wilmington, who had already advanced him part of his next quarter. His wife felt this unkindness more keenly, because it so evidently shewed his want of humanity and of affection towards his children.

The youngest boy suffered the most, and eventually fell a victim to the disorder,

order, which his brothers, whose constitutions were stronger, got over, but from which they continued weakly for some time. This severe loss was a heavy affliction to their affectionate mother, whose love appeared to increase in proportion as they became less dear to their natural protector. Again she was compelled to apply to him for money to bury her little boy. Again she met with a refusal; he sent her no money, only some commonplace condolence, saying, that it was a happy release to his parents, whose circumstances would not allow of his receiving a proper education; and that it would be a good thing if it should please Heaven to take the other two.

Sybella, at first, did not believe the evidence of her own eyes. Was it possible that these were the sentiments of a *father*?—was it possible also that at such a time he denied her money to procure for her dead infant the rights of a decent funeral? Shocked at his barba-

rity, and deeply affected by the loss of her little darling, poor Sybella eagerly parted with all she possessed, to raise sufficient to pay the necessary expences before he could be interred—the remainder she promised to pay by instalments. After seeing the last sad offices performed for her child, Sybella and Maria determined, since they had no prospect of receiving any assistance from Courteney, to move into a still cheaper lodging, and do the best they could for the two remaining boys, who still continued to feel the pernicious effects of their late illness; yet she determined to make one more appeal to the flinty heart of their father, and by setting forth their distress in the most forcible terms, draw from him, if possible, some promise of future relief.

Courteney, in his answer, approved of her removal to a cheaper place, and expressed a desire that she should change her name, lest any person should discovered

covered that *his wife* was in such mean circumstances. He said he would try to let her have *two pounds* when he came to town, which would be very shortly. Maria could not repress any longer her just resentment, but spoke of her brother in a manner which his baseness warranted, and which his desire of his wife's changing her name made still more bitter. Mrs. Courteney could no longer excuse him; her tears and sobs were the only reply that her sister received to all her angry invectives.

“It is for you, Sybella, and your poor abandoned children, that I am thus enraged with my brother; I forgive his conduct towards myself, and the wanton expenditure of all my little property; I could look over the humiliating situation his treachery has placed *me* in; it is the cool and determined cruelty of his behaviour towards his family that has thus roused me; and, if I were you, I would either compel him to allow me something,

thing, or expose his wickedness to his employers. I have not patience that he should live as he does, enjoying every comfort, and spending his money in profligacy, while his wife and children are wanting common necessities. I know more of him than you think, Sybella; but as I am convinced that he means in time to abandon you entirely, I do not see why I should conceal his villany any longer."

"Rail on, my beloved Maria, if it affords you any gratification: for myself, I feel that I have lived too long, since my husband, for whose sake I lost the favour of all my relations, has deserted me. Cruel Leopold! if *I* am no longer dear to you, yet our children surely ought to plead to you for proper support! Alas! that ever he went to lady Wilmington. My fears were too prophetic—our separation will be an eternal one."

"So much the better," replied Maria,
still

still more angry, from the continued mildness of her sister. "What happiness could you expect from the man who fled your arms, and eternally violated your bed? I only regret that he is suffered to go on in his infamous ways, and that the sanctity of his looks, and the religious cant of his conversation, are not known to be assumed. What would the world think, were it known that the pious Leopold Courteney, the moralist, the reformer, the writer of sermons, suffered his wife and children to be abandoned to all the horrors of want and starvation, and all the insults and humiliating degradations attendant on that poverty to which he has wilfully consigned them?"

"Oh, hold, Maria!" said his sister, "your resentment leads you to be unjust; he has not quite abandoned us; he may repent, and return to his family; his poor children he will not surely cast off!"

"Repent!" cried Maria, with a bitter smile;

smile; "yes, yes, he will certainly repent, return to his family, and provide for his children. The man who could witness unmoved the distress of his almost starving wife—who could see his boys with their naked toes out of their tattered shoes—who could hear that these dear objects were frequently compelled to subsist on tea for whole days together, and could refuse to relieve those wants when he had the power, is very likely to repent—yes, yes, it will be a deathbed repentance, I believe."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Sybella; "oh, Maria! I did not think you could be so warm! I did not believe you could pass such severe, such unmerited censure upon any one! Surely you forget that Leopold told us he distressed himself greatly to give us the thirty pounds, and most likely left himself without a guinea!"

"It is but right to undeceive you, my dear, ill-treated sister. Leopold did not
distress

distress himself when he was so uncommonly liberal ; neither did he leave himself without a guinea. He quitted us, knowing that we should go to bed supperless, while he called on one of his ladies, spent the best part of a pound-note in liquor and a luxurious supper, and gave her money to sport about in new silk stockings, with fine open-worked cloaks, which she did the very next day."

" I cannot give credit to this idle and improbable story. Who, Maria, could tell it you ?—you did wrong, my sister, to listen to such an abominable falsehood of your brother."

" My dearest Sybella, your incredulity, after so many recent proofs which you have received of his baseness, is absolute weakness. Had you been less gentle, less inclined to overlook his repeated infidelities, Leopold is so great a coward, that he would not dare to use you as he does ; nay, even now, were you to assume

sume a proper spirit, and threaten to expose him, I am certain you would wring from him a trifle towards your support."

"That I shall never do," replied the injured wife of Courteney; "if his own feelings do not prompt him to be just towards me and my boys, I shall certainly not ruin the future character of their father. My silent submission to his will may do more for me than angry reproaches. He shall not, at least, have any *just* cause for deserting me: but, Maria, you have raised my curiosity; I must know more concerning this cruel calumny; you need not be afraid to tell me, Maria, for I am too well convinced that Leopold has long considered me as a useless burden to him."

"I will tell you," replied Maria, "because I wish to rouse you to a just sense of the injuries you sustain; if not for yourself, at least for your children; do not allow their father wantonly to squander away his property on the most worthless part

part of the creation, while they are literally enduring every deprivation. You remember the little girl who, before we gave up the house, used sometimes to fetch errands for us?"

"I do, very well," said her sister; "she was a nice tidy girl, and I often wished I was able to take her myself, to help to nurse the children—but what of her?"

"I met her a short time after the generous donation of Leopold, and stopped to inquire if she had got a place? The girl coloured, looked confused, and said that she had got one, but that she was going to leave it as soon as her month was up. Upon my asking who she lived with, she hesitated at first, and then told me that she had been near three months in the employment of a fancy-dress-maker, whose name was Heartless. Struck with the name of our old schoolfellow, Betsey Heartless, and still more so by her confusion on seeing me, I inquired if

if my brother ever called on her mistress? The poor girl blushed deeper than before, and I at length drew from her the truth. The visits of Leopold, whom she knew to be a married man, and his familiarities with Betsey, were the cause of her going away, and she rejoiced that she had only a fortnight of her time to remain. I heard that he was frequently in the habit of supping with her mistress, and always upon some expensive delicacy; that, to her knowledge, her mistress received money from him to buy articles of dress for her own person. This led me to ask if she could remember whether he supped at her house on the night he quitted us? 'That he did,' replied the girl; 'for well do I remember that I had been washing, and that my mistress went out to buy something nice for Mr. Courteney's supper; it was a chicken and asparagus; and on seeing me go about scraping them very unwillingly, she said, 'I know you are tired,
Molly,

Molly, but never mind, I will give you the gown I had on yesterday; help me to do these nicely, for Mr. Courteney is very particular in his eating. I don't know how long he staid, for I went to bed; but my mistress bought some new silk stockings the next day; and when she gave me the gown, she told me she had them given her by the gentleman who supped with her last night; that he was an old friend of hers; and that since he was come to town, he would often sup with her.' Sybella, I hope you are convinced that you have nothing to expect from your husband's repentance. It seems that, little time as he has to himself, yet he can find it, whenever he wishes, to sup with Betsey, who, *heartless* like himself, is a very proper companion for him."

Mrs. Courteney had no longer any excuse to make for her husband's conduct; it was too gross even for *her* to attempt his vindication. With a heavy heart she
put

put on her things, and proceeded to find out apartments that would be still cheaper than those which they now occupied. These were soon found, and they removed, in the course of a few days, to a second floor in one of the retired streets of Lambeth.

They had not been here long, before they discovered that their fellow-lodgers were of that unhappy class of women who live by the vices of the other sex. In the first floor resided two of the inferior performers of the Circus, who passed for man and wife, but whose drunken moments betrayed to the contrary. The front-parlour was let to a young woman, whose artless appearance, and still innocent demeanour, would have contradicted every ill-natured report, had not her nightly walks and nightly visitors too forcibly discovered her guilty mode of living.

Shocked at being thus disagreeably situated, yet ignorant how to remedy this fresh misfortune, the unhappy relations

tions of Courteney quietly submitted to an evil, which, for the present at least, was inevitable, since the lowness of their finances would not enable them to live in a more respectable neighbourhood. The poor boys, who went no longer by their father's name, often got cakes and fruit given them by their fellow-lodgers, particularly by the young woman in the parlour, who never failed, as soon as they were sent into the little garden, which was indeed become absolutely necessary to their health, to call them into her room, caress them, and give them something to eat.

This was painful to Sybella and her sister, who had kept them so closely confined with themselves, on purpose to prevent any intimacy, that the children began to feel the ill effects of her prudence; and she was at length obliged to let them play, some part of the day, in the open air. The kindness of their new friend was very acceptable to the poor boys,

boys, who too frequently felt the scantiness of their meals relieved by her donations; nor were her gifts confined alone to eatables—she often bought them toys, and seemed so modestly and so humbly to court the notice of their mother, that she was compelled, at last, to speak to her whenever they accidentally met.

Mrs. Courteney, as well as Maria, soon began to feel themselves interested for her, and to lament that the life of one so apparently innocent and kind-hearted should be so wretched, so degrading. "Perhaps," said Sybella, "this poor girl has fallen a victim to the artifices of some wretch, who no sooner ruined, than he left her. She looks like a country girl; shame has most likely prevented her returning to her friends. How glorious, Maria, it would be to reclaim this poor lost creature—to save her from total ruin! Let us try what we can do by persuasion. Leopold shall go and ask her to tea this evening."

Highly

Highly gratified by this invitation, from those who were evidently good and virtuous, the kind friend of the little Leopold joyfully accompanied him to his mother's apartment. The kind looks, and friendly manners of the sisters, joined to their condescension (for she was well assured that her way of living was known to them), seemed greatly to affect Miss Taylor, and she could not refrain from expressing her thanks for the notice thus taken of one so unfortunate, so guilty.

The tears which flowed from her eyes, her youth, and interesting appearance, all conspired to win the regard and pity of Sybella and her sister, the former of whom took her kindly by the hand, and said, in the gentlest accents—"My dear Miss Taylor, we are too well acquainted with misfortune and sorrow not to feel for your situation. Both my sister and myself have no doubt but that you would gladly quit your present mode of life,
could

could you but find any means of procuring a more honourable way of living. Our own poverty prevents us from affording you one, but Maria and I are so interested in your favour, so convinced that you are not criminal from inclination, that we would do any thing in the world to serve you."

"Oh, you dear angels!" said the young woman, throwing herself on her knees before them, and kissing their hands, "for such you seem to me, God in heaven bless you for ever, for your kindness to a poor deserted creature—deserted by him who swore never to leave me—always to love me, and to protect me from all harm! Indeed, indeed, I would be good—I would lead a better life; but I have no friends, no home that would shelter me, now I have been wicked."

Sybella and her sister both burst into tears; they felt for the poor sinner before them; they felt also the similarity
of

of their situations—*themselves* abandoned by their natural protector. Raising her from the ground, they asked her if she could work at her needle?—if she could, she might do all the plain part of the work they were employed about; and, with care, she might manage to get a decent living. Sybella then shewed her some of the linen they were at work upon; and the poor girl, almost frantic with gratitude, said that she thought she could work well enough to make all but the fancy part.

She would again have fallen on her knees, had not they prevented her.

“Then do not go out to-night,” said Sybella; “stay with us, and to-morrow we will give you some babys’ bed-gowns to make: you may not, at first, like the confinement, but you will soon get used to it; and if you like to bring your work and sit with us, you are very welcome; it will be less dull than being quite alone.

To this Miss Taylor joyfully assented, and blessed them repeatedly for their goodness. "I have not always been the miserable being I am now," said she; "but your kindness deserves to be informed of the cause of my present disgrace. My dear parents, who I hope will never discover my infamy, live about a hundred miles from London; they are very well to do in the world, my father being a wealthy farmer; a good man, an honest man, who would die were my shame made known to him.

"About two years and a half ago, I, poor foolish girl, put too much faith in the words of a gentleman, who came frequently to our house. He looked and talked so like a real good-hearted man, that when he swore to marry me, I almost thought it done, such confidence did I place in his love. One fatal night, it was the wedding-night of my sister, this cruel man stole to my chamber, renewed his vows, swore to love me
through

through life, and taking advantage of my affection and my faith, robbed me of that honour which he never meant to restore.

“I was taken into the same family in which he lived; we came to London; he continued to deceive me with false promises of making me his wife; he got me to leave the protection of my mistress, and go to live, as he said, with a relation of his at Chelsea. I did not like this woman, she was so bold and impudent. On my knees, I begged him to marry me: he could not, or perhaps, after all, he would not: he said he had a wife living——”

Tears choked her utterance, and the sisters, trembling with fears which they could not account for, anxiously awaited her recovery. At length she became sufficiently composed to resume her narrative.

“To be thus deceived, thus cruelly betrayed into sin, made me burn with resentment; I would not suffer him to touch me—I could not; my heart seemed

to abhor him for his falsehood and wickedness. He left me, and I fell ill, very ill. He came again—I could not forgive him, and we parted in mutual anger. I got better, and taking advantage of the woman's seeming good wishes towards me, I consented to go and be servant to a friend of hers, on her promising never to own that she knew any thing of me. This friend was as wicked as herself, and I soon found that I should be turned out of doors to starve, unless I followed her abominable way of life.

“Heartbroken, deceived, and abandoned by him I once loved dearly, I determined never to return to the house of my father. Careless what became of me, and sick of the world, I obeyed, though with horror, the advice, I may say commands, of my mistress; but the money thus wickedly got never seemed to do me any good. I left her about three months ago, and took this lodging, *where my necessities and my ignorance* of

of every human being that would be a friend to me, compelled me to seek a subsistence in the same dreadful way."

"Poor girl," said Sybella, who, as well as her sister, was much affected by the unhappy fate of this young sinner; "poor girl; and have you never seen your seducer since?"

"Never," replied Susan Homely, (for it was no other than the once blooming and happy daughter of the farmer;) "nor do I ever wish to see him again. He must be a bad man, indeed, who could pass for single, ruin a silly country maid, by swearing to marry her the day after he came to town, and then rejoice, as I was told he did, at so easily getting rid of me. God forgive him! I fear he makes but a bad husband, and his poor wife has little cause to be thankful of her bargain. However, although he perjured himself, I am not going to do the same; I promised never to betray him to any one, and I have never yet mentioned his

name. He has ruined me for ever, but I should be loth to expose him, for he would not stay long where he is if I did ; and perhaps his poor wife would then be the sufferer."

Maria and her sister would have given any thing to be acquainted with the name of Miss Taylor's seducer, but after this they could not ask her. They nevertheless redoubled their kind attentions, and got her to promise, very willingly, that she would, from that moment, discontinue her dreadful mode of obtaining her living.

Next morning, she came early for her work, and most gratefully accepted of their offer to sit with them. The trifle of money which she possessed she gave to Sybella, to add to her mite ; and they agreed to have their meals together. The gratitude of this poor girl was so excessive, that seeing her generous friends unable at all times to procure meat for their dinner, she, unknown to them,

them, took some of her things to raise money for their use. So urgent was she to evince her thankfulness, that she sat up long after they were gone to bed, to finish her work the sooner. Nor did the sisters regret this addition to their little family. Susan worked well and fast, began to recover her spirits, and often assisted to raise those of Mrs. Courteney, while she always refused to take sixpence more of her earnings than would pay for her room. This expence they determined to do away ; the woman of the house, who was the wife of a journeyman baker, kindly offered to let them have a press-bed in their sitting-room for Susan to sleep in. Ever grateful for any shew of kindness, the poor girl, thus rendered happy, insisted on cleaning out the parlour, and leaving it in order for a new lodger.

It was while she was thus employed that Courteney called, for the first time, at the fresh abode of his injured family.

His children flew to meet him, but neither his wife nor sister could dissemble the real state of their feelings. Highly offended at their seeming indifference, he expressed himself warmly, adding, that they appeared to know by intuition that he had brought them no money.

This roused the gentle disposition of his hitherto uncomplaining wife; she remembered her dead child, and bursting into tears, said—"No, Leopold, you have no money for your wife or your poor boys; they would have been dead long ago but for me and Maria: yet 'tis hard, very hard indeed, that you can find money to squander upon such creatures as Betsey Heartless, while your own family are living in misery and want."

Courteney's guilty soul felt horror-struck at this unexpected speech of his wife; yet he determined to brave it out boldly. He denied the accusation. She brought proofs against him, and reverted to his barbarity with respect to the little boy

claimed—"Oh, forgive me! forgive me! I did not know he had a wife; indeed, indeed I did not."

Sybella flung her arms around the neck of the kneeling Susan—"Poor injured girl, I believe you.—Oh God, pardon the sins of this young creature, whose ruin is caused by my unkind husband!—Susan," she continued, embracing her, and placing her once more in bed, "your injuries are great—so are mine. Sisters in affliction, both suffering by the same hand, let us comfort and console each other; the wife and family of thy seducer shall endeavour, if possible, to atone, by kindness and affection, for the wrongs thou hast endured from the treachery of our common enemy; we will never part, Susan, unless it is thy wish."

Thus were these unfortunates bound to each other by the strongest ties. The once-innocent daughter of the farmer was more dear to Sybella and Maria,

from the knowledge that Courteney was the author of her ruin ; and Susan, on her part, never thought she could do enough for the generous wife and sister of her betrayer.

CHAP. III.

COURTENey exulted secretly at the chance which he now had of breaking for ever with his wife ; and as he well knew that he had nothing to dread from the patient gentleness of her disposition, he very coolly sat down to write her an eternal farewell. In his letter, he scrupled not to affirm that all his misfortunes had originated from his marrying her ; that they had known but little comfort while they lived together ; and that it had long been his fixed determination never to reside again under the same roof with

a woman

a woman whom he could not be happy with.

He had likewise the hardened impudence to say, that his salary was barely adequate to his own wants; that he found it impossible to provide for his family out of it; and that, as she could not expect him to allow her any money towards her support, well knowing that she was able to work for her living, he should even discontinue writing to her, as he meant, in consequence of her conduct when he last saw her, to drop for ever all further intercourse with her or her sister; for his children he would provide, should he ever have the power; but as their mother had hitherto maintained them, she must continue to do so, until they were old enough to work for her in return: he insisted on their not going by his name: and concluded by saying, that all attempts on her part towards a reconciliation would be perfectly fruitless; and by tormenting him with her letters,
which

which he should return unopened, she would only draw down upon herself and family his severest anger. Having finished this specimen of conjugal tenderness and paternal feeling, he sealed it, and carried it to the post-office, with as serene a countenance, and as steady a hand, as if he had been sending *that* which was to restore his wife and her children to all those comforts of life to which they had so long been strangers.

True to his promise of abandoning his hapless family, Courteney returned, unopened, a letter from his wife, and another from Maria, which they sent merely to try the extent of his villany, not with any hope that even should they be read by him, they would divert him from his plan. Year after year passed by, and he did not, even when in town, trouble himself to inquire if they were yet starved to death. All his leisure time was spent, as usual, in the society of Betsey Heartless, who, though she was unable to fix his wandering

wandering inclinations, yet certainly was by far his greatest favourite; and he never failed, after he had committed any infidelities, to return to her arms with increasing delight.

The poverty of his unhappy family was well known to this woman, but, like her base and infamous admirer, she could see wasted without a pang, and partake without a sigh, of what would have rendered them comfortable and happy for several days. Not only the person, but the temper and manners of Betsey Heartless, pleased the taste of Courteney. Possessed of a high spirit, ever lively address, consummate art, yet with sense enough to hide it, she contrived to keep alive the passions of Leopold, and to gain such an ascendancy over him, without his perceiving it, that he never felt cloyed in her presence, nor tired of her society; she was, in fact, the only woman that had ever held any power over his affections. Many had
been.

been the victims of his pretended love, but all failed to retain any influence over his heart except Betsey ; even at the expiration of ten years, during which time he had, like the bee, strayed from flower to flower, gathering the sweetest honey, he never failed to return with fresh eagerness to Betsey, who smiled to herself at the consciousness of still being preferred, and never failed to welcome his arrival, and to procure for him every little *dainty* which suited the *extreme nicety* of his appetite, not concealing from him, however, her knowledge of his unfaithfulness, yet discovering it in such a manner as only served to rivet more firmly her own power over him.

It gave him some concern how to dispose of his favourite when he should become companion to lord Mortimer, as that nobleman had intimated his intention of residing principally at the Castle; and Betsey had so strongly wound herself round the heart of Courteney, that

to

to separate from her for ever was impossible ; he therefore proposed that she should give up her business in London, and take a house in the town of —, which was only a pleasant ride from Mortimer Castle, where she might set up as dress-maker and milliner: to this she consented, and he was accordingly to look out for a proper habitation for Miss Heartless, (who had long gone by his name,) and who promised to settle all her affairs time enough to obey his summons.

To the benevolent inquiries of lord Mortimer, respecting his amiable and deserted wife, Courteney at length thought he might with safety reply, by announcing *her* demise, as well as that of his two youngest boys ; and when his lordship wished to do something for the surviving one, he replied, that a brother of his wife, who lived in Scotland, had taken him, to bring up entirely as his own son. Thus for ever did he shut out his unoffending

offending children from the good offices and kindness of lord Mortimer, who had generously purposed to exert his interest for the boys of his favourite and friend.

Courteney now began to feel himself of consequence in the family. His pupils were of an age that rendered them desirable companions, and also enabled him to see a great deal of life; as he always accompanied them wherever they went. He was likewise so fortunate as to gain the good opinion of their father-in-law, and Courteney generally made one among the numerous parties which daily assembled at the house of lord St. Laurence.

The nephews of lord Mortimer were already the theme of unqualified praise; their persons, - their accomplishments, their rank, and large fortunes, made them the chief magnet of attraction in the fashionable world; and many an ambitious mother looked forward, with restless anxiety, for the time when the marquiss
and

and his brother would select, from the youthful beauties of the day, their happy and highly-favoured favourites.

Lady Caroline, who was a year younger than lord Edwin, had been educated under the watchful eye of her mother; yet with all the constant care and tenderness of her excellent parent, she still possessed the high spirit and hasty disposition of her elder brother, which would, at moments, obscure the natural goodness of her heart, and make her appear obstinate, haughty, and unfeeling: but no sooner was she convinced of her error, than she became penitent, and all her ambition then was to atone, as much as possible, for her faults.

Young as she was, and purposely kept back by her mother, on account of her disposition, lady Caroline Wilmington was already the object of speculation. She was known to be richer than most of the young women who were marriageable.

able, and therefore her hand was eagerly sought for—nay, some had ventured to apply to her uncle and her mother for permission to address her as their future bride. To all these applications a civil denial was returned. Both the earl and his sister knew her ladyship, when old enough, would make her own choice, and they resolved not to attempt to fetter her inclinations, lest they should lose the authority which they had an undoubted right to exert of advising her on so important a point.

Lady Caroline, notwithstanding the warmth of her temper, and her love of power, was good-natured, affectionate, and a decided enemy to all tyranny and oppression. She was an excellent mimic, and when inclined to amuse herself in that way, seldom paid respect to personages. Courteney's stiffness of deportment, and sanctified visage and address, had frequently been the subject of her ridicule before her governess, and in
this

this she was seconded by a young cousin of hers, a girl about her own age.

Clarissa Beaumont was the favourite of lady Caroline, and as a strict friendship subsisted between their mothers, the young people were repeatedly together. That which at first was a mere matter of course, became, as they grew up, an object of inclination, and affection made the two cousins almost inseparable. The only brother of Miss Beaumont, an amiable and elegant young man, had accompanied the marquis and lord Edwin to Oxford. He was neither so impetuous as the former, nor as yielding as the latter, but was blessed with a mind and temper which partook of the good qualities of each, rendered him a steady friend, a desirable acquaintance, and a charming companion. Lady Caroline had sense enough to find out all his merits, long before her mother had supposed that the idea of a lover had entered her daughter's head, much less that such an object

was the frequent theme of conversation between lady Caroline and Clarissa Beaumont.

No sooner were these two friends introduced, than they became the reigning beauties of the day; a crowd of admirers followed them wherever they went; and had they been ignorant before of their own charms, the general homage they now received would have convinced them more than their looking-glasses; yet amidst this flattering notice, so gratifying to the generality of young women, lady Caroline and her cousin sought only to render themselves beloved, the one by lord Edwin, the other by Adolphus Beaumont. Months seemed years during their absence; and at each recess, the return of the Oxonians was anxiously looked for by the fair cousins.

During one of these, the marquis, with his family, were invited to a ball, given by lady Beaumont, on the birthday

day of her daughter. Among the company was sir Godfrey Louvaine and his two daughters; the eldest immediately attracted the notice of the marquis, who solicited and gained her for a partner. Her figure, which was strikingly beautiful, her graceful movements, and her lively manners, untainted by any improper freedom of deportment, captivated his lordship, who paid the most pointed attentions to her during the evening. In the course of conversation, he learnt that this was the first winter she had been in London; that her father had brought them to town in order to be introduced; and that they would return to his estate in —shire early in spring.

The marquis could think of nothing else during the whole of the night, and even the next day, but Miss Louvaine; in fact, he could talk of nothing else; and his mother therefore requested of lady Beaumont to introduce her to sir Godfrey. The enamoured marquis had
now

now every opportunity of studying the disposition and principles of Miss Louvaine. It was sufficient, however, for him to love her; that alone would have endowed her with every perfection, in the eyes of her lover. Fortunately for his family, Miss Louvaine was worthy of all the tenderness she had inspired; but had she been otherwise, it would have been useless to oppose the wishes of the marquis; his mother and uncle therefore rejoiced at the choice which he had made, and even approved of his sudden resolution to marry as soon as he came of age.

Such a match was too advantageous to be slighted by sir Godfrey Louvaine: his daughter confessed her regard for the marquis, and every thing was consequently put in preparation to celebrate their nuptials on the day on which his lordship came to his estate. The intermediate time, however, was to be spent by Miss Louvaine at her father's, and the

the marquis returned to Oxford for the last time, his head and his heart fit for any thing but study.

Lady Caroline was much pleased with her intended sister-in-law, and, as well as her cousin, looked forward with anticipated pleasure to her marriage with her brother; it would afford her a variety of amusements, and, which was still more to be desired, it would emancipate Adolphus Beaumont and lord Edwin from the restraints of a college, which now made them almost strangers to each other.

The marquis, with all that impatience which was so natural to him, could hardly brook the necessary delay to his wishes. He counted the weeks as they passed with restless inquietude, and almost breathless with the tumult of his passions, he saw the morning arrive which was to set him at liberty. His brother and cousin, with Courteney, bade adieu to Oxford at the same time. Lady

Caroline, well knowing the disposition of her brother, had prepared herself to accompany him and Courteney, the day after his arrival, to the habitation of sir Godfrey, in order to bring his intended bride up to London, where their nuptials were to be celebrated with great magnificence. Courteney accompanied them, at the request of sir Godfrey, and to the great satisfaction of lord Mortimer and his sister, the latter of whom was prevented by indisposition from fetching Miss Louvaine.

Sir Godfrey received his young friends with every demonstration of fatherly affection, and ordered open house to be kept for a month, in the course of which time his daughter would become marchioness of Wilmington. The ceremony was to be performed at lord St. Laurence's, in St. James's-square, and the happy pair were to set out immediately for Louvaine Hall, where they were to spend a fortnight of the honeymoon.

At

At breakfast the next morning after her arrival, lady Caroline inquired if they had any pleasant society near their estate? "I should be moped to death," said she, "were I to lead the life you two girls have done. I like the country as well as any body in summer, but I cannot say that I should much admire to pass my winters out of London."

"We have never, on the contrary, felt a wish to see it," replied Miss Louvaine; "fortunately for us, the few neighbours we have are such as would render any place desirable; one in particular, the family at the Parsonage, we must introduce to your notice: will you walk with us this morning? I am rather anxious to bespeak your friendship for my favourites."

"Ah, go along, go along, 'Mima,'" said sir Godfrey, smiling goodnaturedly on his happy child; "you are never easy unless you are gadding to the Par-

sonage ; I don't know what the marquis will say to it."

"What should he say, my dear father?" replied Miss Louvaine, at the same time giving her lover a look of modest tenderness ; "he will only think and feel as I do, when their worth is made known to him."

"From the hint of sir Godfrey, I suspect, Jemima," cried his lordship, "that the Parsonage family are not all females; but let us go there, my love ; I shall then be able to judge for myself—*your* friends must be *mine*."

"Ask them to dine with us, 'Mima," said her father ; "lady Caroline may be entertained by the girls, and the marquis, I can assure him, will be no less gratified in the well-informed and polished conversation of their brothers."

They now proceeded to the parsonage-house, which was scarce a mile distant from the seat of sir Godfrey, accompanied

nied by Courteney, who determined to amuse himself with the rustic favourites of Miss Louvaine, should he find them tolerably handsome.

“ If that is the abode of your friends,” cried lady Caroline, “ what a sweet place it looks !”

They now approached the parsonage-house, which was situated on a small lawn, beautifully surrounded by trees and shrubs of almost every description. The low projecting thatch, which formed a porch, was supported by pillars of elm, round which the clematis hung its purple flowers, and from them climbed the roof; its relative, the sweet-scented white clematis, the woodbine, jessamine, and moss-rose, mingled their luxurious branches to decorate the windows of the Parsonage: pots of myrtle, geranium, orange trees, and a variety of other elegant flowers, were tastefully disposed in stands under the arcade, and bodes of mignonette were placed in the windows

of this charming residence. Folding glass doors opened into a small marble hall, on each side of which were the sitting-rooms ; in one of these part of the family were assembled.

Mrs. Woodville, one of her daughters, and her eldest son, the young clergyman of the parish, received the noble visitors of Miss Louvaine, with an ease and elegance of manners which proclaimed them to be well educated and well bred. After the first salutations were over, Miss Louvaine eagerly inquired after the remainder of the family.

"Ellen," replied Mrs. Woodville, "is sitting to Theodore for her picture ; he leaves us, you know, in ten days, to join his regiment.—Fanny, tell your sister she is wanted."

"But do not say who is here," said Miss Louvaine ; "I wish to surprise her." Then turning to the marquis, she whispered in his ear—"Prepare yourself, my lord, to see one of the sweetest girls in
the

the world ; Fanny is very pretty, but her sister—oh, here she comes."

The door now opened, and Ellen Woodville, with the graceful lightness of a nymph, sprang forward to receive the orders of her mother. She stopped, blushed deeply, but soon recovered herself, and hastened to the extended hand of Miss Louvaine, who exultingly led her towards the marquis and lady Caroline.

So fair a form had never met their eyes ; she appeared a creature on whom Nature had lavished every charm, to shew to what perfection female loveliness might arrive. Her slender form, light and graceful in all its movements ; her face divinely fair, tinged with the beautiful hue of the apple-blossom ; so pure was her skin, that it seemed as if the sun's warm rays, or the rough winds of winter, had never touched it ; her luxuriant glossy hair, of a pale yellow colour, sported round her dimpled

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checks,

cheeks, and waved in silken ringlets over her polished forehead, shading her azure eyes, which, like the diamond, beamed in their own liquid lustre, as if their brilliancy had never been sullied by a tear. The lovely smile, the ruby lip, the ivory teeth, the frolic mien, as if a stranger to a sigh, but formed alone for bliss, were all dwelt on by the guests of sir Godfrey, who, magic-bound, could scarce repress exclamations of rapturous surprise at the unexpected sight of so captivating a girl.

The marquis and Courteney could see only Ellen, but lady Caroline, on the entrance of Theodore Woodville, found fresh cause to give credit to the friendly partiality of Miss Louvaine. He appeared to be about two-and-twenty; like his brother and Fanny Woodville, his complexion was a clear brown; the vivid colour of the damask rose flushed his cheek, unrivalled save by his lips; his jet black eyes, like the lightning's flash, were

were too powerful to gaze on, till softened by the drooping lid ; his smile, like that of Ellen, was magically sweet, and his voice musically persuasive ; wit and eloquence, truth and honour, dwelt on his tongue ; he seemed the worshipped idol of his family, and of Ellen in particular, while his eyes rested on *her*, with an expression of rapturous tenderness, that spoke the secret pride his heart nourished in being related to so perfect a creature.

“ Well, my lord,” said the inquisitive Courteney, when they were alone, “ what think you of the family at the Parsonage ? ”

“ Think ! ” exclaimed the marquis, “ I scarce saw any but that exquisite little creature, whose blue, laughing eyes, and hoard of countless charms, rivetted all my attention to herself ; by Heavens ! Courteney, she exceeds all that I have yet seen of the finished models of sculp-

ture or of painting!—she is loveliness itself.”

Courteney smiled—“ I confess, my dear lord, that I did not suppose so perfect a being existed ; the Almighty has made her person beautifully attractive—may her mind be equally pure ! she would be a dangerous object for the susceptible lord Edwin to behold.”

“ Do you think *I* am less sensible than *he* is of such beauty ?” inquired the marquis with quickness.

“ Certainly not less *sensible*,” replied Leopold ; “ but the danger cannot be so great where the affections are already engaged.”

The marquis made no reply, but joined his intended bride in the dining-parlour, where he again beheld the fascinating Ellen and her amiable family.

Courteney’s first step was to ingratiate himself with her mother, and to secure the good opinion of her brothers ; his
next

next he purposed should be to gain the confidence and affection of the young beauty herself. Never before had he found himself so irresistibly drawn towards any of her sex : all that he had hitherto felt, compared to that which *her* presence and *her* smile excited, was scarce to be denominated passion ; and he resolved to make every sacrifice, and to run every risk, to possess the matchless person of Ellen Woodville. His penetration easily discovered that he had not now to take captive a mind and heart of the common stamp ; yet his vanity led him to believe that he only wanted time and opportunity to gain over both of these to his interest, as readily as he had been accustomed to do with others of a humbler nature. The gravity and studied sincerity of his manners, the piety of his discourse, which seemed to spring from the natural goodness of his soul, charmed Mrs. Woodville and her eldest son ; they esteemed

themselves fortunate in being introduced to so exemplary a character, and hoped that their acquaintance would not end with his visit to sir Godfrey.

Miss Louvaine and her sister were much attached to Fanny and Ellen Woodville; they had known them nearly two years, and seldom a day elapsed without their seeing some of the family at the Parsonage. Sir Godfrey was equally pleased with the acquaintance, had a great regard for the young curate and his brother, and thought that such a woman was seldom to be met with as their mother; so highly did he esteem her, that had he been less advanced in years, he would certainly have made her an offer of his hand; but, at his time of life, he thought it more decorous to cherish her as a friend, than to subject himself to the ridicule of some of his relations, who were not particularly addicted to the fault of being termed over-good-natured. Fanny and her twin
sister

sister he loved as well as his own daughters, and felt as much interested in their welfare and future establishment in life ; he was therefore not a little gratified at hearing Miss Louvaine express a wish to have Ellen accompany her to London, where he naturally concluded she would only need be seen to be admired, and secure by her beauty a heart worthy her acceptance.

Lady Caroline, who already loved Ellen almost as much as Clarissa Beaumont, seconded the entreaties of Miss Louvaine, and begged Mrs. Woodville to spare her daughter to them, for the fortnight they were to stay in London. The marquis eagerly joined in their request ; and the scruples of Mrs. Woodville were at length silenced, by the united persuasions of sir Godfrey and his family. All rejoiced at the prospect of pleasure which now offered itself to Ellen, all except Theodore.

“ Ah, my dear mother,” said the young

young hero, "will it not be dangerous to trust such a form and face as Ellen's in the midst of every temptation which the luxury of the metropolis affords, without your protecting arms to shield her from its baneful influence?"

"You forget, my Theodore," replied Mrs. Woodville, "that our Ellen's mind is as beautiful as her person: the education she has received, the virtuous principles I have instilled into her heart, her own natural purity of ideas, and abhorrence of every thing like vice, will sufficiently guard her against falling into error. That worthy man Mr. Courteney has also promised to watch over my sweet girl during her residence in London, and to make her acquainted with the characters of those with whom she will associate."

Theodore too highly venerated the opinions of his mother to dispute their authority or justness; yet he nevertheless disliked his beloved Ellen's quitting her

her home for the gay and dissipated scenes of town, unless under the watchful care of her mother. Unwilling, however, to damp the blissful spirits of his sister, he concealed his repugnance to the journey, only requesting her to write constantly.

"Dearest Theodore," said Ellen, throwing her white arms round his neck, "I regret but one thing in this visit—I shall lose three days of your company, for which no society or amusement will be able to make amends."

"She flatters you, Theodore," cried Fanny, archly; "should she chance to meet with the young stranger whom she saw at the inn, two summers back, and be much in his company, she will forget to wish for that of her brother."

"Nay, Fanny," said Ellen, blushing, "it was his striking likeness to Theodore that attracted my notice, and has made me speak of him so often."

Theodore pressed her to his bosom—
"Beloved

“ Beloved Ellen, you will leave us to-morrow for the first time : do not allow yourself, my sister, to be captivated with the luxury and magnificence which will surround you, lest this simple habitation should, on your return to it, cease to please you as it now does : above all, my Ellen, guard well your heart ; receive the willing homage which will be paid to your charms as incense which is due to them, but suffer not your judgment to be guided by the flattery you will call forth ; I would not have my dear sister too easily decide on the choice of him who must either be the blessing or the curse of her future life.”

“ Fear not, my brother,” replied the embarrassed Ellen ; “ my heart will not very readily make its election. You know I have always said that I could never love unless the object were like yourself ; and it is not probable that, during my short stay in London, I should meet with a second Theodore.”

Here

Her brother affectionately kissed her dimpled cheek.

"I also, my dearest sister, feel convinced that I can never love any woman that does not resemble my Ellen in person and mind. Wedded, however, to my profession, glory shall be the mistress of my heart. Despairing ever to find your counterpart, I shall give up all hopes of marrying, and look forward to becoming a grey-headed benedict, from inclination, rather than necessity: but what says my Fanny?—have you resolved, like Ellen, to lead a life of celibacy, unless you can find an object to answer your imaginary expectations?"

"No, indeed," said the twin sister of Ellen; "I have made no such resolution; my dear mother has spoken in such happy terms of the pleasures she enjoyed during the lifetime of our lamented father, and depicted, in such glowing colours, the felicity of an union such as ~~theirs~~, that I cannot help thinking
a single

a single woman must be an object of pity rather than of envy: at present, however, I am too young and too well contented with my situation to wish it changed."

"Here comes the marquis and his intended bride," cried Theodore, who perceived them from one of the windows of the room in which they were sitting, "and James, with Dora Louvaine. I am mistaken if they are not perfectly in agreement with Fanny's opinion of matrimony."

The approach of the visitors put an end to their conversation: they came to fetch Mrs. Woodville and her family to spend the day at sir Godfrey's. Ellen was to sleep at the Hall, as the marquis purposed setting off very early the next morning, that he might arrive in town by the dinner-hour of lord St. Laurence.

Courtency, who, in the space of a week, had contrived to gain the confidence of Mrs. Woodville and the attention

tion and respect of Ellen, rejoiced at their departure. He longed to see what effect the gaieties of London would have on the youthful mind of Ellen: he would have dreaded the influence of such exquisite loveliness on the gentle and tender heart of lord Edwin, had he not fortunately recollected that his whole soul seemed to be absorbed by the remembrance of a circumstance which took place during one of the vacations.

The marquis, with Courteney, lord Edwin, and some Oxonians, went on a rambling excursion of pleasure, some miles distant from London. In the course of the day, he chanced to see a young lady, whose beauty had been the constant theme of his private conversations; he dwelt on it with rapture, and declared to his brother and Courteney that he should never be happy unless he could find out the bewitching girl, whose image had thus remained indelibly impressed on his memory. Both
the

the marquis and his tutor only laughed at his earnestness, and treated his ardent longings with ridicule ; yet now Courteney remembered them with satisfaction, since it afforded him the hope that Ellen, all beautiful as she was, would nevertheless not have power to eclipse the idol of his warm imagination.

Lady Caroline was so pleased with the family at the Parsonage, that she did not once find occasion to exert her talent for ridicule ; she embraced Fanny Woodville and her mother, and promised to accompany the new-married pair back to sir Godfrey's, merely that she might have the gratification of seeing them again. Her good-nature and affability were much commended by Mrs. Woodville, who rather rejoiced than otherwise that Ellen had gained so highly advantageous an acquaintance. She now quitted her lovely child for the first time since her birth, yet the momentary selfishness which gave her uneasiness at parting.

parting was soon over, as she considered the virtues of Ellen, and the shortness of her stay: Theodore, however, had no such consolation as the latter idea afforded; he was, in three days, going to join his regiment, and months might elapse before he should again behold the sister he adored. He embraced her tenderly, and repeated his desire that she should write to him constantly; then, with an unquiet mind, returned with his family to the Parsonage.

It may not now be amiss to give a short sketch of the Woodvilles, who were thus introduced to the friendship of the marquis of Wilmington and his sister. Mrs. Woodville was the daughter of a country gentleman, of good fortune, who spared no expence to render the education of this his only child as accomplished as possible. She married very early to an amiable man, whose profession soon separated her from the home of her infancy; yet his undeviating

rank in life was inferior to hers, he yet secretly resolved not to thwart the affections of Dora, should the curate, who strongly resembled his mother, feel reciprocal tenderness for his child. This generous determination in their favour was, however, unknown to the young people; yet Dora nourished hope, from the liberality of her father's mind, and from his evident attachment to her lover and his family. She quitted him now for the second time since they had been known to each other, to attend the nuptials of her sister, whose splendid establishment she viewed with indifference, all her wishes being confined to a far narrower sphere, all her desires being centered within the walls of the Parsonage.

CHAP. IV.

LORD Edwin was from home when his brother and the bridal-party arrived, and was not expected for several days; Clarissa Beaumont was however waiting at lord St. Laurence's to receive them. Ellen met with a most flattering reception from all the family, from lord Mortimer in particular, who taking her hand, kissed it with great gallantry, and led her to a seat next his own.

When the fair travellers had retired to dress for dinner, lord Mortimer called Courteney aside, and inquired concerning the family of Miss Woodville. After he had received all the information he wished, he expressed his admiration of her person, and hoped his niece would cultivate the acquaintance of so interesting an object. Courteney was guarded

in his replies; the warmth of his own feelings rendered such precaution necessary; he therefore observed, that Miss Woodville was certainly very beautiful, but that time alone could discover whether she was worthy to become the friend of lady Caroline.

As Ellen had never before visited London, they all proposed to go, the next evening, to the theatre, where Mrs. Siddons was to perform one of her best characters; the night after that, to the opera; and, in short, to shew her every amusement that was deserving her attention; the mornings were to be devoted to shopping and occasional visits, and the evenings to fresh scenes of pleasure.

The marchioness had issued six hundred cards for a ball and supper, preparatory to the nuptials of her son; and Ellen, who could form no idea of the gratification to be derived from so large an assembly, longed to be an eye-witness of what seemed to fill the minds of her
new

new friends, lady Caroline and Miss Beaumont, with delight. Miss Louvaine had insisted on making her a present of a dress, as bride's-maid ; it was ordered to be the same as Dora's, and that, she knew, would be extremely rich : unwilling, however, to offend a friend she fondly loved, Ellen consented to accept the bridal gift.

" You must not refuse to receive one from me likewise," said Dora, " or I shall think, Ellen, that you love me less than you do Jemima." She then put into her hand a set of fine pearl ornaments, which she had bought expressly for her favourite ; among them was a locket, which contained the hair of Miss Louvaine and her sister. Ellen's eyes sparkled with unexpected pleasure ; she pressed the trinket to her lips with all the enthusiasm of genuine affection.

" This little ornament," she cried, " made sacred by its contents, is more
c 2 valuable,

valuable, my dear friends, to me than its costly accompaniments."

"What shall I do, Ellen," said lady Caroline, "to make you love me as well as you do the Louvaines? Clarissa is half jealous of my regard for you; she would be wholly so, but that you have contrived, somehow or other, to win her heart as well as mine. Take care, Ellen, that you do not exert this witchery over that of our absent Edwin. My uncle, my father, and the pious, devout *ci-devant* tutor of my brothers, all appear charmed with you; nay, I have even caught the eyes of the marquis wandering from the person of his inamorato. Don't blush, Ellen; there are no beaux present to witness how much your beauty is heightened by your confusion."

"Your ladyship has learnt to flatter from your brothers, I suppose," replied Ellen, "or from some of your own numerous admirers; what they with justice
assert

assert of your ladyship will not bear to be applied to any other female."

Lady Caroline was inclined to vanity, and therefore received this compliment from Ellen with a smile of approbation; while Miss Woodville, with every superior personal attraction, thought less of herself than many girls who could not boast a quarter of her beauty. Accustomed to be treated by her own family with every endearing tenderness, the kindness she now met with from all the marquis's relations did not appear new to her; what most she valued was the flattering attentions of Lord Mortimer; his advanced age, his knowledge of human nature, and his ever-instructive conversation, made Ellen listen to him with pleasure, and feel flattered by the distinction with which he treated her. *He* was also gratified by this enviable preference from one so young, so lovely, and so worthy of being beloved.

Lord Edwin had now lengthened his

stay several days longer than his sister expected. The morning of the ball arrived, and they began to fear lest he should have forgotten it altogether. Ellen felt a little desirous to behold the brother of lady Caroline ; she wanted to know if he resembled his sister or the marquis, and she could not help wishing that he might arrive in time for the dance.

Lady Caroline had expressed a desire that she should learn a new duet, which was just sent her; and Ellen, after breakfast, retired to the music-room for that purpose. In the midst of her practising, lord Edwin arrived: his sister hastened to meet him, to chide him for his absence, and to conduct him to see her new favourite. The marchioness, however, called her daughter, who was in consequence compelled to quit her brother, and he proceeded alone to the music-room, thinking to find there either Miss Louvaine or Clarissa Beaumont.

Opening

Opening the door suddenly, he came forward to meet, as he thought, the destined bride of the marquis. Ellen stopped, turned her head, and beheld the stranger whose likeness to Theodore had so strongly interested her in his favour. Both coloured deeply, from surprise and pleasure. Lord Edwin sprang towards her, and taking her hand, exclaimed—“ Good Heavens ! am I at length so blest as once more to behold the object of my unwearied solicitude ? I know not by what name to address you, lovely creature, or by what fortunate circumstance I thus unexpectedly find you at my mother’s ; but suffer me at least to tell you, that your image has been ever present to my mind since I saw you at the inn ; and that I consider this, our second meeting, as one of the happiest moments of my existence.” He ventured to carry her little soft hand to his lips, when lady Caroline came running into the apartment.

"Help me, dear Miss Woodville," said her ladyship, "to scold Edwin for staying away from us so long. Where is Adolphus?—we have been in terrible want of you both since we came to town."

"I left Beaumont at his mother's," replied her brother, "but you may expect him shortly. Do not scold me, dear Caroline; I am already too severely punished for my fault, in the consciousness of the loss I have sustained by not being here to receive you."

Lady Caroline kissed his cheek affectionately—"Well, well, I will not scold you this once, but, on the contrary, tell you that I am very happy you are come in time for the ball; Clarissa would have had no pleasure all the evening had you not been here."

The colour on lord Edwin's cheek grew deeper; he sat down confusedly to the piano, and ran his fingers rapidly over the keys.

"Edwin,

“Edwin, I want you to learn this duet with Miss Woodville; your voices will sound most charmingly together; Clarissa sings scientifically, but she wants the silvery sweetness which Ellen possesses: come, my dear girl, let me hear if you know it perfectly.”

Ellen had not yet recovered from her surprise, on discovering that the stranger was brother to lady Caroline Wilmington; her heart still fluttered, and the delicate pink on her cheek was deepened by the circumstance; but she nevertheless sat down to the instrument, and increased the admiration of lord Edwin by the taste she displayed, and the rich harmony of her voice. Most joyfully did she escape from their praise, on the entrance of Courteney, who came to seek his pupil. Lady Caroline soon followed her, and lord Edwin nearly annihilated his tutor, by the unwelcome information that Ellen was the lovely maid whose beauty he had vainly endeavoured to

forget.

forget. The transport of lord Edwin alone prevented him from noticing the cadaverous hue which overspread the features of Courteney on receiving this unwelcome intelligence ; the latter actually trembled in every limb, and so excessive was his agitation, that he found himself compelled to quit abruptly his enamoured pupil.

In his own chamber he nevertheless soon acquired the dominion over his feelings—"Why am I thus agitated?" said he ; "can the imprudent passion of this love-sick boy give me a moment's concern?—have I not succeeded before now in separating two beings who idolized each other, and who were even bound together by the strong tie of marriage? Ellen may not return the affection of lord Edwin—or if she does, what then? Why, her ruin will be more certain, more sure : let me but once get her within my power, and she is mine beyond the possibility of being rescued
by

by mortal aid. Should she, however, dare aspire to become the wife of lord Edwin, my artifices shall lure her to inevitable destruction ; my seeming pity, my friendship, my private counsels, shall hasten her fate. Oh, Ellen ! what powerful attraction lurks within the circle of thy snowy arms, that *I*, who till now deemed woman a creature merely calculated to beguile away an idle hour, should be forced to own that no sacrifice would be *too great* to secure, for ever, the presence of such a being as thyself?"

Courteney was in his three-and-fortieth year ; he had seen more of women than most men of his age, yet never before had he *loved* one like Ellen. With *her*, he even imagined that the yoke of matrimony, which to him was an antidote to love, would be not only bearable, but a thing to be considered as a blessing, since it would enable him to live for ever in the presence of the beautiful

the accomplished Ellen Woodville. He was, however, ignorant of the fate of his neglected wife ; she might have survived his desertion ; he would therefore, while he was in town, make some inquiries concerning her : should she have fallen a martyr to his cruelty, he would then be free to offer himself to Ellen. Her mother highly respected him, all her family esteemed him, she herself paid great deference to his opinions, and spoke of his writings in terms of praise truly flattering to his vanity.

As he had written several sermons, some of which had been preached by lord Mortimer's chaplain, he artfully contrived to shew them to James Woodville, who begged permission to read them to his mother. This was precisely what Courteney wanted, and upon his next interview with Mrs. Woodville, he discovered that they had had the desired effect—that of raising him still higher in her estimation. From this circumstance
he

he did not allow himself to suppose but that she would willingly accept of him as a husband for Ellen; nay, his passion became at length so ardent, that he resolved to hazard the discovery of his first marriage, should his wife be still living, marry Ellen, and reside with her wholly in the country. He nevertheless determined to conceal, for a time, his intentions as well as his attachment, as chance might bring about some circumstance favourable to his wishes.

Ellen, unconscious of being the subject of his principal meditations, could think of nothing else but the singularity of her not only meeting with the stranger for whom she had felt so interested, but that he should also be the brother of lady Caroline, who had professed so much regard for her. Always neat and elegant in her person, she now wished to be still more so, and even dressed herself for the dance with studied carefulness. The Miss Louvaines were attired the same

as

as herself; both were remarkably well made, and very pretty girls, but Ellen completely eclipsed them. She wore a robe of pale pink silk, tastefully trimmed with rich white lace, which went twice round the bottom of the dress, and formed robings down each side of the front; her sleeves were made shorter than her delicacy could tolerate, she therefore added an additional row of lace to make up for their deficiency; her beautiful yellow hair was dressed in the Greek fashion, and confined by golden combs, ornamented with large pearls; on her bosom she wore the locket which contained the treasured hair of the Miss Louvaines, suspended from a rich chain, the gift of Dora; her white and graceful arms were likewise decorated with pearls, and round her slender waist was clasped a girdle, to match the rest of her ornaments.

Ellen, for the first time, felt a secret gratification at hearing her person extolled

toll'd by her friends, and lady Caroline, who came to see if she was ready to go down to the drawing-room.

"Dearest Ellen," cried Miss Louvaine, "you must, to oblige Dora and myself, put on this wreath of wild roses; we shall then all three be exactly alike."

Ellen took the wreath, and placed it amidst the luxuriant ringlets of her silken hair.

"There, now you are quite enchanting!" exclaimed lady Caroline. "Well, positively I must be very good-natured to tolerate so handsome a girl as you are. Do, pray, Ellen, get married as fast as you can, that we single women may enjoy our beaux in peace and quiet, without the fear of being compelled to yield them to your superior charms. I wish I was a man, Ellen, for to-night only; how I should delight in the envy I should excite by having you for a partner! Come, let us run down, and hear what papa and mama say to our little rustic.

Verily,

Verily, verily, I should not be surprised if the power of your beauty did not move the pious Courteney to worship the flesh instead of the spirit.'

Ellen smiled, and the Louvaines laughed. Lady Caroline caught the hand of her new favourite—"Let me have the supreme felicity, Miss Woodville," said she, mimicking the grave manner of Leopold, "to conduct you to the marchioness and the earl of St. Laurence."

In the drawing-room they found the family assembled. Lord Edwin gazed with tenderness on the object of universal admiration; the delicate fairness of her complexion, the sweet glow on her cheek, heightened by the desire of appearing amiable in the sight of lord Edwin, the sparkling lustre of her bright blue eyes, and the matchless symmetry of her round, yet slender figure, made her appear the most finished of God's creatures.

The marquis was talking to Miss Louvaine

vaine about their nuptials, yet he could not forbear, every now and then, casting a glance towards her beautiful friend; while lord Mortimer, taking her hand, pressed it kindly, and placing her by his side on a couch, said—"I foresee, dear Miss Woodville, that many will have cause to complain of this night's amusement, since the loss of liberty is the loss of man's proudest prerogative; one look, one little smile of yours, will make many captives.—Caroline," said his lordship, turning towards his sister, "who shall we select as a partner for this dangerous little beauty?—suppose Courteney is the first to excite the envy of all our young men?"

"Dear uncle," cried lady Caroline, who was advancing with Clarissa Beaumont, "what! would you match fifteen to forty?—My poor Ellen, sooner than you should undergo such mortification, and do penance before you have committed
any

any crime, I will resign my partner to you for the two first dances."

"May I venture to solicit the honour of your hand for the next?" inquired lord Edwin, timidly.

Ellen felt that she blushed.

"Yes, yes," said his sister; "I will promise for Miss Woodville; Edwin, you shall succeed Adolphus; go and fetch him hither."

Young Beaumont was not long in obeying the summons of lady Caroline: he had seen and inquired of his friend, lord Edwin, the name of the beautiful girl who sat next lord Mortimer, and longed to be introduced to her.

"Adolphus," exclaimed lady Caroline, presenting him with the hand of Ellen, "will you ever dare dispute my good-nature, after having voluntarily secured for you the enviable distinction of being the first to dance with Miss Woodville? You were engaged to me, but

but never mind that; I will dance with you the next dances; Ellen was in want of a partner, and I resolved that you should be made the happy man."

Beaumont's eyes sparkled with grateful exultation; he kissed the hand of lady Caroline, and thanked her for the honour she had done him. The company now began to assemble rapidly, and the magnificent suit of apartments were soon filled. The crowd, the lights, the decorations, all were new to Ellen. The music soon invited the younger part of the company to the ball-room, and Beaumont joyfully came to conduct her to the enlivening scene, secretly blessing his good fortune, and the kindness of lady Caroline, which had given him the hand of so sweet a being.

Ellen felt timid as she joined the gazing group; all eyes were fixed on her, those of the men with admiration, those of the women principally with envy:

Dora

Dora Louvaine stood next her, and saw her embarrassment.

"Do not be afraid, dearest Ellen," whispered her kind friend; "few, if any, that are present will dance with your graceful ease: you know how often James has praised your performance, and *he* is an excellent judge."

Ellen also remembered that Theodore had been delighted by her dancing, and this alone encouraged her. Dora was right; few indeed could vie with Ellen in this graceful accomplishment. The generality of the young women of rank moved in so slovenly and careless a manner, that Ellen at first imagined them to be greatly fatigued, until Adolphus Beaumont informed her that it was the *fashion*. She smiled at the absurdity of being guided in the movement of the limbs by any thing so ridiculous, and felt too exhilarated herself to copy from any of the languid performers that were present.

present. Exercise, and the powerful charm of a fine band of music, increased the native beauty of Ellen ; she smiled so bewitchingly, and looked so perfectly happy, that her partner resigned her with regret, even for lady Caroline, who was too much the woman of fashion to betray the secret pleasure she always experienced in so lively an amusement.

Lord Edwin could hardly restrain his impatience until the conclusion of the dance, which gave him liberty to speak to the object of his fixed attention. Clarissa thought him very dull, and went to his sister to complain of him, while he hastened to the spot which contained Ellen, who was seated between the Miss Louvaines. The marquis was standing opposite them, and there were some present who were ill-natured enough to say that his eyes were more frequently turned towards Ellen than on his intended bride : be that as it may, he certainly thought her by far the most lovely girl

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in the room ; and had he not been so far engaged to Miss Louvaine, there is little doubt but that Ellen would have been, had she pleased, marchioness of Wilmington. Ellen, however, was unconscious of his prepossession in her favour; she gave her hand willingly to his brother; she replied to his inquiries concerning her family with even more than her usual sweetness, for she longed to know if lord Edwin's mind, as well as his person, resembled her beloved Theodore's.

The younger brother of lady Caroline could but ill conceal his sentiments ; his black eyes languished with tenderness whenever they encountered those of Ellen ; his voice trembled, his cheek flushed, and every movement betrayed how madly he doted on the new favourite of his sister. Ellen listened to him with pleasure ; she thought it was her brother that was present ; the jet black eyes of Theodore possessed more
fire

fire than those of lord Edwin ; but when speaking to her, they expressed the most tender affection, the most melting softness ; he was the object of her fondest love, of her constant solicitude ; was it to be wondered then that she felt her bosom throb at the sound of a voice which resembled his, at the glance of an eye which so strongly reminded her of Theodore's uniform kindness ?

Lord Edwin soon learnt from his sister of his likeness to the favourite brother of Ellen Woodville : modest and diffident of his own personal acquirements, he instantly attributed to *this* the flattering attention which Ellen paid to all he said, and he became ambitious to render himself pleasing to her on his *own* account. With care he studied to find out every thing which gave her pleasure, and practised all her favourite music, that he might have the chance of joining her in her performance. He determined also to accompany his brother

ther

ther back to sir Godfrey Louvaine's, that he might at least enjoy as much as possible the society of Ellen, and be introduced to her family.

Courteney listened with malignant vexation to the warm praises which lord Edwin lavished on Ellen; he acknowledged that the object of his adoration was seducingly beautiful, but he reminded him of the family pride of his uncle, which had sacrificed his only child, and which would never consent to his nephew's marrying one so much his inferior in birth and fortune.

The gentle disposition of lord Edwin made him appear to yield to the counsels of Courteney, for whom he entertained the most affectionate respect: he nevertheless resolved to accompany Ellen back to the Parsonage: lord Mortimer also consented to Courteney's being of the party, as sir Godfrey had expressed a strong desire for him to return with the new-married pair. They were to stay a fortnight

night at sir Godfrey's, and from thence proceed to lady Beaumont's, where they had promised to spend ten days before they joined the rest of the family at Mortimer Castle. Here the marquis and his bride purposed to remain during the rest of the season, and here also lord Mortimer now resolved to pass his winter, with his highly-favoured friend and companion, the learned and pious Leopold Courteney.

More and more enamoured with Ellen, this *amiable* man set out, early one morning, to trace out if possible the habitation of his deserted wife, hoping most fervently to hear that her death had restored him to his freedom. So many years had elapsed, that he found it extremely difficult to find out the people with whom she had lived at the time when he had called and bade her a final adieu. After the labour of several hours, he at length discovered the abode of these people, but from them he obtained

no satisfactory information. Ignorant of who he was, and supposing that his inquiries proceeded from benevolence, they regretted that they could not inform him whether Mrs. Powell and her children were alive, for by that name Sybella had been known to them.

“She did not stay above a year with us,” said the baker, “and my wife and I were sorry enough to lose her, for she was a quiet, modest, well-behaved woman, and so was her sister. Poor things! I believe they worked very hard for what they got, and I suspect that Mrs. Powell had but a bad sort of a man for her husband; I never saw him, but I think any man must be no better than a scoundrel to run away from his wife and family, as I am pretty certain he did, though she, poor thing, wanted it to seem that he was gone abroad: she used to receive letters from the country, but they were not from him we know; and then, she used to pay her rent with such joy.

God

God bless her heart ! I am sure it was an honest one."

" Ah, that it was," exclaimed his wife; " I am sure I have cried many a time to think how hard they lived : and the poor young woman too whom they reclaimed from wickedness, and cherished as if she had been their sister, she was a good creature, and most likely owed her ruin to some villain, who promised to marry her—God bless them all, wherever they be !"

Courteney's curiosity was now raised : who could it be that Sybella and Maria had taken to live with them ? The baker's wife satisfied him as much as she could, but she was ignorant of Susan's real name. Her illness, however, on the sight of some person who had visited Sybella, left him no room to doubt but that she was one of the unfortunate beings who had fallen a victim to his perfidy, and whom his injured wife had

thus generously snatched from certain destruction.

"It is strange," said the hypocrite, "that Mrs. Powell should not have told you where she was going to reside?"

"She did not, I assure you, sir," replied the woman; "she had been unwell some weeks, and not able to do as much work as usual, and the poor boys were but badly off for things; indeed I fear they often went without a dinner, that they might pay the rent, and I always wanted her to let it run on till she was better off; but she would not, for fear that she should not be able to pay us; and I believe her sister wrote to some friend in the country, for a young gentleman called soon after, and gave them some money, and staid a good while, and sent for some wine and things for Mrs. Powell, and she soon got better after she had taken them: he called several times, and always staid an hour

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or two ; and the poor boys were both new clothed ; and Mrs. Powell, as soon as she was quite well, gave us notice that she should leave. Sorry enough I was to lose her."

"Do you remember the name of the gentleman who called?" inquired Courteney, with no very enviable emotions.

"No, sir, I do not," replied the baker's wife ; "but they all seemed to worship him ; and I heard Mrs. Powell call him her guardian angel, and say that they must all have gone to the workhouse but for him. He was not more than four-and-twenty, I am certain, and indeed he did look like a guardian angel : he was so handsome, and spoke so feelingly to me as I opened the door to him one day, when I was very poorly myself, that I could not help noticing it to Miss Maria, who said that he was one of the best men in the world."

Courteney, vexed, mortified, and for a moment humbled, by the conviction of

his own baseness, now quitted the baker's shop, not doubting for an instant but that the generous benefactor of his wife was the betrayed and deeply-injured Deloraine. Far from feeling grateful for his kindness to Sybella and the children, Leopold felt an increase of hatred towards him. Mean, selfish, and vile, beyond the generality of depraved characters, Courteney attributed the noble conduct of Deloraine to the ungenerous motive of triumphing over the man he had once called friend. Il-liberal and revengeful himself, he could not believe that Deloraine was actuated by the purest benevolence, the most disinterested friendship and humanity.

Disappointed in his search, and vexed to the soul by the impossibility of proving *that* which he most wished, the death of Sybella, Courteney returned to the house which contained the innocent object of his adoration; such it may be termed, for basely as he had acted ever to-
wards

wards women, yet he had never, even in thought, violated the purity of Ellen's person; he loved her passionately and sincerely; the idea of making her his mistress had never once occurred to him; all that he desired was, to secure to himself for ever her constant society, her love and confidence. The ardent passion of lord Edwin did not so much alarm him, as he well knew the power he possessed over his yielding mind; and he did not despair of convincing him of the folly of an attachment which must ever be hopeless, unless, indeed, he had courage to brave the displeasure of his uncle, and this was not likely, from the affectionate and easy nature of the young lord.

CHAP. V.

At length the morning arrived which raised Miss Louvaine to the rank of marchioness: lady Caroline, Dora Louvaine, Clarissa Beaumont, and Ellen, were her bride's maids. The travelling-carriages were at the door, ready to convey them to sir Godfrey's as soon as the ceremony was over. Lord Mortimer, after embracing the young marchioness, saluted Ellen, who, dressed in her virgin robes, looked more lovely than ever.

"Sweet girl!" said the earl, with parental kindness, "I have passed some delightful hours in your company, and cannot see your departure without a sentiment of real concern; perhaps the eloquence of Caroline, which is always powerful in the cause of friendship, may be successfully exerted to promote my wishes, and your mother may be induced

to spare you to us this summer at Mortimer Castle."

Ellen's heart beat quick with unexpected pleasure—"I will try, uncle, you may be certain," said lady Caroline, "for Clarissa and I have proposed several amusements, which will be tame and insipid without Miss Woodville."

Young Beaumont kissed her hand respectfully at parting—"I shall live," said he, in a low voice, "in the blissful hope of seeing you again at the Castle." He then hastened to conduct lady Caroline to her carriage.

The marquis and his bride set off in an elegant new chariot, with four outriders, followed by a barouche, in which were lady Caroline, her brother, Dora Louvaine, Ellen, and Courteney, their maids having gone before them. Mrs. Woodville and all her family were at sir Godfrey's to welcome their arrival; the bells rung merrily, all the servants had on their new state liveries, and a great

many of the tenantry followed the carriages with the loudest acclamations of joy and affection. Sir Godfrey opened his arms to receive his happy daughter, and to give her and the marquis his paternal benediction. Dora Louvaine, blushing with pleasure, suffered herself to be conducted into the drawing-room by James Woodville, while Ellen sprang into the extended arms of her mother, who pressed her rapturously to her bosom, and then resigned her to the affectionate Fanny, who hastened with her to the dressing-room of Dora.

"Dearest Ellen," said she, almost breathless with surprise, "can it be possible? have I not seen the handsome stranger who is so like to Theodore?"

"Yes, Fanny, it is lord Edwin Wilmington, the brother of lady Caroline, and I think resembles our dear Theodore in every thing, for which we so justly idolize him."

"Ah, Ellen," cried Fanny, archly, as
she

she assisted her to change her dress,
"was I not right in my conjecture?—
have you wished for Theodore since you
have resided under the same roof with
this interesting stranger?"

Ellen coloured as she said—"Had I
been so fortunate as to have had you and
my beloved mother with me, I should
have known no alloy to the happiness I
have enjoyed. Compelled to separate
from Theodore, lord Edwin alone pos-
sesses the power of supplying his place,
of being to me all that my dear brother
is. Oh, Fanny! I long for night, to tell
you how I have passed my time; I have
been so petted since I have been away,
that I sometimes fancied myself at home;
and when lord Edwin was by my side,
when he looked at me, when he spoke to
me, the illusion was still greater, for I
imagined it was my Theodore, and I
found it difficult to repress my feelings;
this alone destroyed the dear fiction of
my senses. I recollected that it was a
H 6 stranger

stranger that was addressing me, and that my dear brother was many miles distant."

Dora Louvaine now entered to change her dress. "I think, Fanny," said she, "that James looks pale—has he been unwell?"

Fanny smiled—"Have you not been absent for a fortnight, dearest Dora, and are you not likely to be away from us now for several months?"

"No, indeed," replied her friend; "I mean to stay at home with my father; my sister can well spare my attendance, but my dear father cannot."

"May I tell my brother this joyful intelligence?" inquired Fanny.

Dora coloured, and replied—"Certainly, if you think it will afford him any gratification: but, Fanny, are you not pleased to find that the stranger whom Ellen has so often described to me is the brother of the marquis? I wish I had been present when they first met; how I should have enjoyed their confusion!"

"I believe

"I believe you," said Ellen, with vivacity ; "for I well remember how pleased I was at entering unexpectedly sir Godfrey's library, when James was on one knee before Dora Louvaine, who looked so embarrassed, and blushed so becomingly, that I could not help laughing at the discovery I had made."

"You lovely tormentor !" exclaimed her friend, "I recollect that evening, and the little mercy you displayed for my confusion. I am mistaken if I shall not be revenged on *you* very shortly, and then James and I will not spare your ladyship, I assure you."

"Ha, ha, ha !" laughed Ellen ; "I give you leave, my friend, to laugh as much as you like if ever you catch me looking half as silly as the lady I mentioned."

"It is all very well, my dear Ellen, but unless the eyes of lord Edwin are traitors to his heart, they have already told me that he thought just as much

of Ellen Woodville as that little wild and frolic girl did of him. There is Adolphus Beaumont likewise, who I have caught sighing and pining for one glance of that lovely dimpled face of thine: ah, Ellen, you may smile and look incredulous, but lady Caroline and Clarissa are formidable rivals to encounter. I do not think for a moment that Edwin is attached to Miss Beaumont, or Adolphus to Caroline, yet they have known each other from children, and have been accustomed to bestow mutually many little proofs of affection, which has increased on the part of Caroline and Clarissa, who, I am certain, look upon the young men as their destined husbands."

"And what, dear Dora, is all this to me?" said Ellen; "I confess I feel an esteem for Mr. Beaumont; his kind and respectful attentions to me while in London, could not fail of exciting my gratitude; as for lord Edwin——"

"Oh,

"Oh," cried Fanny, "you need not tell us what sentiments he has given birth to; Dora and I are perfectly acquainted with your opinion of Theodore's counterpart. Hark, there is the dinner-bell; let us obey its summons."

Dora Louvaine was the favourite of both sisters; she was of a more even and steady disposition than Jemima; her attachment to James Woodville made her more dear to his sisters, and they concealed nothing from the gentle and affectionate Dora, who took the earliest opportunity of making known her intentions of remaining at home with her father. This determination endeared her still more to the Woodvilles; and sir Godfrey, tenderly embracing her, declared that she should not repent the sacrifice she made to increase his comforts, and attend him during the severe attacks he occasionally had of the gout. The marchioness, who was much attached to her sister, felt rather mortified at the
idea

idea of separating from her for the first time in his life : sir Godfrey, however, promised that Dora should pass the winter in London, and that he would, if possible, accompany her on a visit to the dowager marchioness of Wilmington.

" I must once more tax the friendship of Mrs. Woodville," said the young marchioness, " and beg her to let me have Ellen, who alone is capable of supplying the place of Dora."

Sir Godfrey approved of her intention, and the marquis, as soon as he was apprized of it, appeared highly delighted at the determination of his wife, who, with lady Caroline, accordingly walked to the Parsonage.

" I am come, my dear madam," said the marchioness, " to trespass upon your good-nature, and to ask a favour of you which will greatly contribute to my happiness."

" And to mine also," cried lady Caroline : " you must not deny us, dear Mrs. Woodville,

Woodville, for our hearts are set upon having Ellen of our party when we go to the Castle this autumn."

"Do not refuse us, I beseech you," continued the marchioness: "Dora stays at home with my father, and I shall be quite lost even in the society of my dear Caroline, unless you permit Ellen to bear us company. You know I am sometimes tormented by a nervous lowness of spirits, which her fascinating smile and blissful countenance soon disperses, and restores me to my usual tranquillity. You hesitate, my dear Mrs. Woodville; believe me, that Ellen shall be in every respect the same to me as Dora."

"The partiality your ladyship manifests for my daughter," replied Mrs. Woodville, "as well as the flattering notice she has received from lady Caroline and her noble family, is peculiarly gratifying to my feelings. I do not hesitate from any fear that she will ever prove undeserving the kindness she has

met

met with, but I dread lest the continuing to reside for so long a time amidst every luxury and splendour, may render her own comparatively humble home less dear to her than it is at present ; it may, even with her well-regulated mind, produce ambitious hopes, which can never be gratified : her education has been liberal ; her versatility of talent, her interesting person, all conspire to render Ellen, at fifteen, an object calculated to inspire the best and worst of passions. Pardon me, my dear marchioness, but you and lady Caroline are both too young to afford protection to Ellen, should she stand in need of any, and there are many in the fashionable world who might think it glorious to insult, by dishonourable proposals, the sister of a *country parson*."

" They should not do it with impunity ! " hastily exclaimed lady Caroline ; " my uncle has taken a great fancy to Ellen, and if she resides under his roof, he

he will consider her as his child: my brothers likewise esteem her too highly to suffer any person to treat her with neglect or insult; and I flatter myself also, my dear Mrs. Woodville, that the affection which the marchioness as well as myself manifest towards Ellen, would silence any such illiberal hopes."

"You are all goodness," said Mrs. Woodville, "and I know not how to deny your kind request; suffer me, however, to have this day to decide upon the matter; to-morrow Ellen herself shall be the bearer of my answer."

"Let it be a favourable one, I entreat you," said the marchioness; "we shall continue only ten days at lady Beaumont's after we leave my father. Were it not asking too much, I should presume still further on your kindness, and ask of you to let Fanny accompany us there? My maid, whose age and good conduct render her trust-worthy, should bring her back, and conduct Ellen to lady Beaumont's,

Beaumont's, where we should be waiting to receive her."

"And Courteney, I am confident, would willingly afford them his protection," cried lady Caroline; "do, therefore, dear Mrs. Woodville, take pity upon your humble petitioners, and mercifully grant their request."

Mrs. Woodville smiled benignly on the beseeching lady Caroline, and once more repeated, that Ellen should deliver her final answer to them on the morrow. With this assurance they returned to the Hall, in the pleasing hope of having their wishes realized.

"And now, Courteney," said lady Caroline, as she entered the dining-parlour, "you must call on Mrs. Woodville this evening, and second our hopes by your advice and potent eloquence. You must vow that my brothers, and all the young men who are likely to visit us at the Castle, are the best behaved and most honourable-minded fellows in the world, and

and that you will likewise be Ellen's father-confessor, and keep strict watch over all her smiles and dimples, lest they should seduce some gay Lothario to steal away the beautiful Hebe of the Parsonage; do this, my dear sir, and you will eternally oblige me."

Courteney was not slow in executing the wishes of lady Caroline; it was to his interest to gain the consent of Mrs. Woodville for Ellen to accompany them to the Castle; and he therefore put on his best looks, and assumed his most pious and most persuasive demeanor, to gain his point, and to draw on himself the gratitude of lady Caroline and her sister-in-law.

As he had expected, he found Mrs. Woodville overjoyed at his visit, and ready to consult with him on the propriety of letting Ellen continue to reside among those whose rank and fortune made them her superiors. Courteney had already wound himself into her
good

good opinion ; she thought him the most devout, the most sincere and friendly of human beings, and he felt conscious that she meant to abide by his sentiments more than her own : he spoke highly of the prudence of Ellen's behaviour, during her short stay in London, not concealing the universal admiration her personal attractions had produced ; yet he hesitated not to pronounce it as his opinion, that no harm could arise from her being allowed to accompany her friends to the Castle, and that Ellen's principles were too well established, and her mind too highly enriched, by the excellent precepts of her mother, to be moved by the magnificence of her new mode of living.

Mrs. Woodville, delighted by the praise of a man such as she conceived Courteney to be, at length consented to part a second time from Ellen, firmly believing that this young and innocent girl would be regarded by Courteney in
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the light of a daughter, and receive from him the valuable advice of a father. She had taken him into a private apartment, that their conference might not be interrupted by any of the family ; and so highly did she esteem the sanctity of Courteney's morals, and the excellency of his heart and understanding, that she hesitated not to entrust him with several little circumstances concerning her family which were unknown even to her children, and to ask his opinion and advice on some important affairs relative to their future happiness and welfare.

Courteney, thrown off his guard by the flattering preference of Mrs. Woodville, was just going to disclose his passion for her daughter, when he was not only prevented, but his intention frustrated, by her confidential communications. Disappointed in the first and dearest wish of his soul, he had recourse to his long-practised dissimulation to veil the severe mortification he had received :

ceived: he struggled hard within himself to appear as composed as usual; and notwithstanding the annihilation of his fondest hopes, still maintained the same opinion respecting Ellen's visit to the Castle. Mrs. Woodville therefore sent for her daughter, to make known her determination, and gave her permission to return with Leopold to sir Godfrey's, to inform her generous friends that she was at liberty to attend them.

Ellen, enraptured at this intelligence, sprang forward, and catching the hand of Courteney, pressed it to her sweet lips, saying, with the most bewitching air—"Dear Mr. Courteney, it is to your friendly eloquence that I am indebted for this favour; how much am I obliged to you!" Then hurrying out of the apartment, she went to communicate her mother's permission to her sister, and to ask her to walk with her to sir Godfrey's.

Courteney left them at the entrance
of

of the hall, and retired to his own chamber. He had been unusually silent during their walk; but the happy state of Ellen's mind did not allow of her noticing this change in his manner. Fanny, who had a message to deliver from James to Dora Louvaine, hastened into the music-room, where she generally went after dinner; and Ellen, animated by the pleasing intelligence she had to communicate, sought the rest of the family in the saloon.

Lord Edwin was there alone; he rose joyfully to meet the happy girl; his first question was, had she gained the consent of her mother to make one of the party to his uncle's? Her reply was heard with every demonstration of rapture; and his happiness could only be equalled by that of Ellen.

"Dearest Miss Woodville," said he, timidly pressing her soft hand in his, "you know not the felicity you have bestowed on me by this intelligence.

Caroline will be so rejoiced ! We all love you so sincerely, that we shall find it difficult to express our gratitude to your mother for her kindness. For myself, I must not attempt to convince her how inexpressibly happy she has made *me* in particular. Allow me to conduct you to my sister, who is walking with the marquis in the shrubbery."

Ellen gave him her hand, which he carried to his lips; in doing this, he looked so like her brother Theodore, that she could not avoid feeling an increase of pleasure at his touch; and her lovely and expressive features betrayed what passed within her bosom. Lord Edwin trembled as he led her to where the marquis and lady Caroline were seated; he longed yet dared not tell her how fondly he adored her, for the cautions of his preceptor were ever present to his memory.

The marquis openly evinced his joy at the prospect of so charming an acquisition

quisition to their society; and lady Caroline declared that she would go herself that evening to thank Mrs. Woodville. They now returned to the house, where they were joined by the marchioness, her sister, Fanny, and sir Godfrey. All were delighted at Mrs. Woodville's readiness to oblige them; all volunteered to escort Ellen and Fanny back to the Parsonage. Courteney alone excused himself from being of the party; he had letters which he said must be written that night, therefore begged that his presence might be dispensed with.

“ Oh dear me !” cried lady Caroline, assuming a grave air, “ what shall I do for my beau ! how much good sense and morality shall I not lose this evening by these abominable letters !—Come, Fanny Woodville, I think you are more serious than Ellen ; give me your arm—nay, what do you laugh at, Miss ? I see you will never do to personate my dear religious preceptor ; I can do it much bet-

ter myself. Hem——” Her ladyship was just beginning to mimic the air and attitude of Courteney, when they were joined by James Woodville, who came to see his sisters home.

“Your brother, Fanny, must not see me take off poor Courteney,” said lady Caroline; “but I will not be disappointed, for I am just in the humour to mimic his grave demure manner of conversing—Edwin, will you take care of Ellen Woodville? Fanny and I wish to walk by ourselves.” Then, drawing her friend on one side, she let the marquis and his bride, Ellen and lord Edwin, with the rest of the party, pass before them.

Lord Edwin smiling said—“You are at some mischief, Caroline, I perceive by your looks.”

“Never mind my looks, Edwin; attend to those of your companion.”

She then, after they had gained some distance, began to screw up her face, stiffen her body, and mimic so exactly
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the manner of Courteney's moving and speaking, that Fanny was almost convulsed with laughter.

" Oh fie, Fanny Woodville ! " cried her ladyship, resuming her own natural voice and air, as they drew near the Parsonage ; " here have I, for this quarter of an hour, been preaching to you upon the folly and vanity of all human wishes, and exhorting you to wean your affections from all earthly things, and to lead a godly life, lest you be suddenly cut off in the blossom of your days, and you have been so abominably prophane as to do nothing but laugh at me ; I will make you do penance for your levity when I get you at lady Beaumont's. Now be serious, Fanny, lest your good mother should repent of her condescension, and revoke her promise."

Mrs. Woodville received her grateful visitors with her accustomed ease and elegance of manners ; and felt pleased that she had possessed the power

of conferring on them what they seemed to consider as a real favour. Fanny was accordingly desired to prepare herself against her friends quitted sir Godfrey Louvaine's; and Ellen to hold herself in readiness to attend them to Mortimer Castle.

CHAP. VI.

WHATEVER might have been the nature of Mrs. Woodville's confidential communications to Courteney, they certainly operated most powerfully on his mind and body, since he complained of being sufficiently unwell to authorize him to keep his chamber for a couple of days, during which time he met with every attention from sir Godfrey and his family, as well as from James Woodville, who called by his mother's request, as soon as Courteney's

ney's indisposition was made known to her. At the expiration of that time, he however thought it best to smother the secret uneasiness he suffered, and join the family, who were now on the eve of quitting sir Godfrey's for lady Beaumont's.

Contrary to his established rule, Leopold permitted lord Edwin to enjoy the privilege of Ellen's society unrestrained by his presence, and unawed by his watchful glances. Sir Godfrey had been slightly attacked by his old enemy, the gout, and Courteney made that a pretence to remain with him and play at backgammon. Lord Edwin, thus left at liberty to act and speak as his feelings dictated, always contrived, during the remainder of his stay, to engross the attention of Ellen. He felt enraptured as her arm gently rested on his; he gathered flowers to adorn her bosom and her hair; and sometimes ventured to kiss her hand, as she smilingly held

it out to receive his odoriferous presents.

It was on the evening before he quitted sir Godfrey Louvaine's, that he had strolled with Ellen far from the rest of the family, and had arrived first at the Parsonage. Ellen seated herself in one of the windows of the parlour, which fronted the lawn, and which was half overshadowed by the luxurious branches of the shrubs which grew over it. Lord Edwin placed himself by her side, and taking her hand, pressed it tenderly in his own. Ellen coloured; and breaking off a piece of the white clematis, was going to place it in her own snowy bosom.

His lordship took the flower, and sighing; said—"To-morrow, dearest Miss Woodville, at this hour, I shall be seated by a far different object; but my mind, my soul will be here! Oh, could I but dare to hope that you would deign to bestow one thought on me during the ten days
of

of painful exile which I shall endure, it would enable me to support an absence which will otherwise be tedious in the extreme."

Ellen smiled—"Indeed, my lord, permit me to say that I think you flatter me. What would you have done, had not my mother yielded to the kind request of lady Caroline and the marchioness?"

"I know not," said his lordship, placing the flower within the bosom of his shirt; "but it is most likely, had such been the case, that I should have committed some folly which might have drawn on me your displeasure. I should never have been able, I am convinced, to exist without seeing you occasionally. Pardon me, I entreat, dear Miss Woodville; say but that you forgive my boldness—my presumption!"

Ellen felt overjoyed by the arrival of the party, who now joined them, and prevented the necessity of her reply. She did not, however, at parting with lord

Edwin, manifest any resentment for his boldness; on the contrary, she suffered him to kiss her hand, and even bestowed on her timid lover a glance of good-natured friendliness. Fanny was requested to breakfast with her friends at sir Godfrey's, and James Woodville was to accompany her. The marchioness and lady Caroline embraced Ellen, and desired her not to forget her engagement; while Courtenay was obliged to repeat once more to her mother his promise of watching over her daughter with all imaginable care and fidelity.

Mrs. Woodville sincerely regretted his absence, and besought him earnestly not to lose any opportunity that occurred of paying them a visit; adding, that she should be happy to see him at all times, and as often as he could make it convenient. James Woodville squeezed his hand, and joined in his mother's request; and so callous had the heart of the hypocrite become, that he felt no pang of remorse

remorse—no self-reproach, at this unre-mitted kindness from two amiable beings, whose friendship he was returning by the basest hypocrisy—the most consummate dissimulation.

Mrs. Woodville had made choice of Leopold for a confidential friend for two reasons—first, from his situation in life, he might by chance discover some information respecting a part of her family, which *justice* alone made her anxious to obtain; secondly, his uniform gravity of deportment, and a certain seemingly disinterested and sincere mode of expressing himself, joined with his apparent high sense of all moral duties, made him not only a fit, but a most desirable friend and counsellor for Mrs. Woodville and her lovely daughter. Nor would she have hesitated to entrust her with him alone, had that been requisite. The kindness of the marchioness, however, rendered that unnecessary, as she proposed to send her carriage with her own

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maid,

maid, a steady elderly woman, to bring back Fanny, and to return with Ellen.

The latter had received several letters from Theodore, to whom she had immediately imparted the unexpected discovery which she had made of the interesting stranger. With all the amiable confidence of youth, Ellen had vouched for the virtues of lord Edwin. He looked and spoke so like Theodore—was so affectionate a brother, so tender a friend, that Ellen pronounced him to be the counterpart of her beloved Theodore in every thing. Her only regret was, that she could not introduce two such highly valued beings to each other.

Theodore, on his part, felt alarmed at the warmth of Ellen's expressions. She had always declared that she could never love any one that did not resemble himself. Now, then, she had met with the object she had imagined did not exist, of course Ellen's heart was no longer in her own keeping, her future
happiness

happiness in life was now at stake. Tenderly solicitous for the peace of one dear to him beyond expression, Theodore conjured her to reflect on the rank of lord Edwin, and the little probability there was of his family consenting to so unequal a match. With the deepest regret he learnt of her intended visit to the Castle, and cautioned her not to listen either to the passion of his lordship, or the pleadings of her own heart.

Ellen replied to him with all imaginable innocence and candour—"Fear not for my happiness, dearest Theodore," said she in reply to his letter. "My peace of mind cannot be endangered by my associating with lord Edwin; the regard which I confess I feel for him, is built upon the surest foundation—upon his own virtues; were he less amiable, less honourable—in short, were he unworthy of myself in the noble qualities of the man, I could not entertain for him the esteem which, believing him to be a man of

thing that *you* are, I now do. Were it possible for me to be deceived in him, were it possible for him to act with meanness or dissimulation, my regard would cease; pity and the most poignant regret alone would remain. But, my beloved Theodore, I have no reason to suppose that his lordship views me in any other light than that of a sister. The affectionate nature of his disposition makes him appear, perhaps, at times more tender towards me than the marquis, or his friend Mr. Beaumont; the latter of whom I believe to be worthy even the friendship of my Theodore.

“The good and learned Mr. Courteney, under whose pious care and direction lord Edwin and his brother have been educated, honours me with particular notice, and seems to feel for me the interest and affection of a father. I do not think my dear mother would have consented to my visiting the Castle, had it not been for this kind and worthy man.

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Do not, therefore, my dear brother, I conjure you, suffer yourself to be under any apprehensions on my account. Were I even disposed to make lord Edwin the arbiter of my fate, and were I convinced that his tenderest affections were irrevocably mine, even then you would have no cause to fear my prudence or my delicacy.

“ Believe, me, Theodore, that young as I am, the lessons of my exemplary mother, and the advice of him whose image no lover can ever efface from my heart, have not been listened to by an inattentive pupil. The proud independence of spirit which I possess will sufficiently guard me from being enticed, into a clandestine marriage. I would not enter into the family of a prince, did not every individual of that family open their arms to receive me ; nor would I accept the hand of any man whose narrowness of mind prevented his acknowledging me to be his equal.

“ With

“ With this hereditary guardian of my honour, you will perceive, my Theodore, that your Ellen is in no very great danger of being drawn into any indiscretion, which Love, with all his witcheries, might otherwise induce her to commit. If, unknown to myself, my affections have been called forth, and fixed upon lord Edwin, it is because he possesses the endearing manners, the sweet persuasive voice, the tender look of my dear brother, all of which serve to remind me of those blissful hours which we passed together in the days of our childhood—days that I look back to with delight. Alas! will they e’er return? or am I doomed for ever to lament the choice of a profession which separates me from the beloved brother of my soul?”

The fears of Theodore Woodville were not, however, perfectly silenced by the reasoning of his sister. He had been four years in the army, and had gained more knowledge of the world in that time,

time, than he could otherwise have obtained at his years. He had associated with a set of dashing young men, whose external appearance was highly prepossessing ; but the looseness of their morals, and the little honour they evinced towards that sex which had the strongest claim to their protection, shocked and disgusted him. He could scarce credit that any man of sense, and, in other respects, of feeling and humanity, could make a subject of boasting among his brother officers of the artifices to which he had been compelled to resort, before he could obtain a victory over innocence and credulity. Yet these very men were brave in the field of battle, benevolent to the poor, and strictly honourable in all their dealings with their own sex.

By Theodore, whose heart melted at the voice of a female in distress, and who felt that the humblest woman had a claim to his protection and generosity, such a mode of conduct could not be tolerated ;

olated; he therefore mixed as little as he could help with his brother officers, who for a long while endeavoured to bring him over to their way of thinking and living, till tired by their fruitless attempts, they gave him up as a bad subject, and suffered him to do as he thought proper.

One gentleman alone was an exception to the rest; and with captain Maxwell, Theodore associated the best part of each day, when he was not on duty.

Colin Maxwell was the eldest son of a brave and meritorious officer; who had served his country with honour, and whose last moments were breathed on the field of battle. His death deprived his widow of an affectionate husband; and a family of eight children thus suddenly lost a tender father and friend. Colin and two of his brothers were lieutenants in the army; the remaining five were unfortunately girls, and consequently not so easily provided for. He knew his
mother's

mother's finances were circumscribed, and therefore refused to accept of her advancing a sum of money sufficient to purchase him a captaincy in his regiment, which had become vacant by the death of its possessor. This generous self-denial was made known to his superior officer, whose high commendations of the bravery and good conduct of Colin Maxwell obtained for him that rank in the regiment which filial affection had induced him to decline.

Theodore had no sooner entered the regiment, of which Maxwell was captain, than a friendship commenced, which was likely, one day or other, to be rendered more firm by a family alliance. From the following circumstance, he had discovered Theodore's talent for painting. Calling on him one morning earlier than usual, Colin found his friend busily employed in re-touching some miniatures, one of which was the picture of Fanny Woodville.

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After congratulating Theodore upon the possession of so charming an art, he inquired if that was the resemblance of a favourite lady? adding, that he had never before seen a countenance which gave fairer promise of a sweet disposition and a refined mind.

Theodore smilingly replied, that he was glad that such was his opinion, for that he hoped, in the course of a few days, to introduce him to her, and assured him that she would not discredit his humble imitation of her personal attractions.

Theodore, for reasons best known to himself, did not shew young Maxwell his likeness of Ellen; one of those reasons, however, was, that he imagined he had not done sufficient justice to her faultless beauties, and resolved, when he next visited home, to delineate them more correctly.

In a short time captain Maxwell and Theodore got leave of absence; the former was going to London, and the latter

ter to his mother. The two friends travelled together with very different feelings: Theodore was all life and joy at the prospect of embracing his family; and Colin Maxwell felt a feverish impatience to see the original of the miniature, yet remembered, with a sigh of regret, that she was the beloved of his friend. They stopped at length at the elegant and romantic residence of James Woodville.

"Now, my dear Maxwell," cried Theodore exultingly, "you shall behold the lady whose resemblance you honoured by such particular notice."

The step of the chaise was scarcely let down, when Fanny and Ellen flew across the lawn, and were in a moment round the neck of their brother, who, pressing them fondly to his bosom, gave a hand of each to his admiring friend.

"My sisters," said Theodore, casting an arch look at Colin. "Fanny and Ellen Woodville, this is that dear friend
whose

whose name I have so repeatedly mentioned to you in my letters."

Captain Maxwell's cheek crimsoned with unexpected pleasure; he carried each of the fair hands to his lips; but that of Fanny he held the longest. Theodore now introduced him to his mother and James; it was sufficient for them to learn that he was the esteemed friend of Theodore. All strove to make him welcome to the Parsonage; and Mrs. Woodville and her eldest son requested him to remain with them as long as he could conveniently spare them his society. Colin needed no second invitation. All around him appeared fairy land, and Fanny the goddess of the scene.

"Well, my dear Maxwell," said Theodore, when they were alone, "what think you of my sisters? does the original of the miniature answer your expectations? or has Fanny disappointed you?"

"Rather say has she not exceeded them," replied his friend; "but how cunningly

cunningly you concealed from me that the sweet girl was your sister ! Upon my soul, Theodore, you know not the secret vexation you have caused me, and the many struggles I have had between my friendship for you, and my prepossession for your charming sister. Thank Heaven, I can now adore her—without infringing on the rights of my dearest friend.”

Theodore pressed his hand affectionately.

“ My dear Colin, I know of no man on earth that I should so much covet for a brother as yourself. I will not say one word to influence you in favour of Fanny ; stay with us a fortnight of our month’s leave of absence, and judge for yourself. In justice, however, to my sister, I must add, that she is always the same as when you first saw her ; but, Maxwell, have you not one word of commendation to bestow on Ellen ? If you seek to know the object of my adoration, it is her. Oh, never can the tenderest wife be
~~dearer~~

dearer to my heart than Ellen! Never can I feel a passion for any woman that does not resemble that ever-happy, blissful little creature!"

"Had I not seen the picture of Fanny before I beheld the matchless form of her sister," replied captain Maxwell, "I might have yielded up my heart at the shrine of her superior beauty. Ellen scarcely appears mortal; I gaze on her with the same indefinable purity of mind as when contemplating the resemblance of some celestial being; but in Fanny's gentle eye, I fancy I can read a heart which would return my love with warm yet chastened tenderness, and which would willingly devote the whole of her time to render me happy, supposing myself to be so fortunate as to gain her affections. Were I to offend Fanny, I am mistaken if a kiss of mine—a kind word, would not instantly seal my pardon. The fire and brilliancy which occasionally darts from the blue eyes of Ellen—the
ready

ready wit which dwells on her honied tongue—and above all, the consciousness that she merits universal homage, would demand more than *my* spirit could willingly perform. A man like yourself, my dear Theodore, is alone calculated to make Ellen happy. It shall be my study to secure the heart of Fanny, whose picture I now claim from you, as a proof not only of your friendship, but your approbation of my pretensions.”

Theodore immediately presented him with the miniature of his sister, and took the earliest opportunity of mentioning to his mother the attachment of his friend. Mrs. Woodville did not disapprove of it; and Theodore conducted young Maxwell into the presence of his mother.

Trembling with hope and fear, Colin took the extended hand of Mrs. Woodville, and pressed it affectionately to his lips. With her native candour, she attempted not to conceal from him either

her satisfaction at his choice, or her wishes respecting his future conduct : she permitted him to gain the love of Fanny, to consider her as his future bride, should it be agreeable to her daughter ; but as she was very young, her fortune small, and his in expectation, she did not think it prudent for them to marry for two or three years.

Colin, delighted by this goodness, though attached to Fanny by the most honourable feelings, perfectly coincided with her mother's advice ; notwithstanding his income was at present very limited, yet he was heir to about seven hundred a-year at the decease of an old maiden aunt, who was now grown so very infirm, that she was not expected to survive many weeks ; she had also promised him a considerable sum in ready money ; and with this fortune he would be enabled to provide handsomely for Fanny, and do something for his sisters. The fortnight he staid at the Parsonage only endear-
ed

ed him the more to Mrs. Woodville and her family; and Fanny, who knew not of the arrangement which had been made, heard of his departure with regret.

Colin, the evening before he was compelled to leave a family now become as dear to him as his own, took the opportunity which had been purposely given him, of disclosing his regard, and of entreating her to correspond with him during his absence; Fanny heard him with bashful pleasure, yet acknowledged that she was too young to judge even of her own feelings. She confessed, that from the praises of her brother, she had often wished to be acquainted with a friend so dear as he was become to Theodore; that the accomplishment of her wish had increased the opinion she had already formed; and that she certainly preferred him above all men she had hitherto seen.

"Dearest Fanny," said Colin, "I will be satisfied with *this* for the present; let us

correspond regularly together ; and when next I have the happiness of visiting this house, and of seeing my adored Fanny, I may perhaps learn from her mother, if her own delicacy will not betray it, that I am become more dear to her."

" My mother, I know, esteems you highly," replied Fanny blushing ; " but are you sure that she would approve of my bestowing my affections unsanctioned by her authority ?"

Colin now repeated sufficient of their conversation to do away the dutiful apprehensions of Fanny ; he shewed her the miniature which he wore in his bosom, and described his feelings on first beholding it in the possession of her brother. Fanny's heart beat quicker at this proof of her lover's tenderness. She no longer withheld her promise to write to him constantly ; and even requested that he would sit to Theodore for his picture, which she begged might be conveyed to her as early as possible.

Colin,

Colin, enraptured by this request, ventured to throw his arms round the blushing girl, and to press his lips to hers. With her consent, he cut off a ringlet of her dark hair ; and felt still more delighted at her asking, in a tremulous voice, for one of his : thus mutually satisfied with each other, they parted for a time.

Captain Maxwell now hastened to his mother and sisters, who resided near London, and to whom he represented his Fanny in such an amiable light, that Mrs. Maxwell immediately wrote to her mother, soliciting the pleasure of her correspondence ; and Stella, the favourite sister of Colin, requested permission to enclose a note to the destined wife of her brother, whose likeness had already made a strong claim on her regard. Mrs. Woodville's reply was gratifying to the parental tenderness of Mrs. Maxwell ; and from that hour a regular correspondence was kept up between the two families.

Ellen, during her short stay in London, called twice on Mrs. Maxwell, accompanied by Dora Louvaine; and if the family of Colin were captivated by the elegance and beauty of Ellen Woodville, she was not less pleased with the affectionate reception she met with from his mother and sisters.

At the earnest solicitations of Mrs. Woodville, Stella and Jessy Maxwell, the two eldest sisters of Colin, were to pay a visit that summer to the Parsonage, and to remain as long as their mother could spare them. Colin took leave of his family the same day that Ellen had arrived in London, and hurried as fast as four fleet horses could carry him to the Parsonage, whence, after passing one day of bliss with his Fanny, he set off with Theodore to join his regiment, then stationed at one of the seaports. They were, however, in great expectation of being removed before winter, and therefore allowed themselves to hope that they

they might be so fortunate as to spend their Christmas at the Parsonage.

Theodore, to oblige his sister, lost no time in executing an admirable likeness of his friend, which was conveyed to her before she quitted home to pay her visit to lady Beaumont. Her excessive bashfulness made it painful to her to be rallied upon the subject of Colin's attachment; and her family had therefore forbore to mention it even to the Louvaines. Dora had, however, discovered it from a trifling circumstance; and as Fanny was the chief repository of all her thoughts concerning James Woodville, his sister at length confessed her regard for captain Maxwell, and shewed her the masterly performance of Theodore.

It was one of his best pictures. The happy countenance of Colin evinced all the tenderness which filled his heart as he sat to the brother of his beloved Fanny, and as his mind dwelt on the anticipated pleasure of again beholding

her—of seeing on her faithful bosom this image of himself.

Dora returned the miniature to the blushing Fanny, whose eyes sparkled with grateful love, as she listened to the praises bestowed on her lover by the gentle daughter of sir Godfrey.

“Happy, happy Fanny!” exclaimed Dora, “to possess so inestimable a treasure. Ah, my sweet friend! I should deem myself the most fortunate of women, had I but as just a likeness of James.”

During the absence of Fanny, Stella and Jessy Maxwell arrived at the Parsonage. They were Scotch beauties; lively, animated, and good-natured; and sang the beautiful melodies of their native country with great tenderness and skill. Ellen, who was passionately fond of music, soon learnt to play those melodies with all the pathos of a Scotch minstrel. The rich harmony of her voice, and the peculiar sweetness and mellowness of

of its tones, frequently drew tears from the eyes of her hearers.

The Miss Maxwells, although they eagerly desired to behold their intended sister-in-law, yet felt sorry that her presence would rob them of Ellen's society. The graces of her mind and person, and the captivating witchery of her conversation, almost made them regret that this fascinating girl was not the object of their brother's choice.

"Perhaps," said the eldest sister of Colin Maxwell, "were Ellen to see my brother Archibald, her heart would readily acknowledge him for its master, and we should then have no dread of losing so sweet a friend."

Stella, however, felt all hope of this kind vanish by one glance of Ellen's expressive eye—one little smile which dimpled her cheeks on the return of Fanny from lady Beaumont's. Ellen knew the day on which she was expected; and had been employed the chief of the morning

in arranging fresh flowers in the stands underneath the portico of the house. She gathered those which she knew were most pleasing to her sister, to decorate their sitting-room, and even dressed herself with more than usual elegance.

"Who do you expect besides Fanny, my dear Ellen," inquired her mother, smiling on her affectionately, "that you have taken such care in the disposal of your ringlets, and put on the most becoming of your dresses? That wreath of pink convallulus which you have drawn through your hair, suits the fairness of your skin; but, my Ellen, is all this in compliment to Mr. Courteney? I fear, my love, such nicety will make him vain."

Ellen blushed, but was silent; she did not indeed know herself why she had been thus particular. It was not, however, to receive Mr. Courteney; of that at least she was assured.

Stella and Jessy anxiously watched
for

for the carriage of the marchioness; while Ellen looked at her watch every now and then, and thought her sister would be too late for dinner. The watch was a present from Theodore; and as she looked on it, her own half-formed wishes, and his recent advice, deepened the bloom on her cheek.

The rapid wheels of a carriage were now heard. Ellen rose to meet her sister; yet a secret hope—a secret fear of betraying more than she wished, arrested her steps; and Fanny had flown across the lawn, and was in the arms of Ellen, before the latter had moved from the arcade. The same feelings prevented her from raising her eyes until she felt the pressure of a hand, and heard the sound of a voice that stole into her heart, and called the warm blush of pleasure even into her eyes. It was lord Edwin, who, at the request of his mother, had accompanied Courteney and the marchioness's maid to fetch Ellen.

Fanny was seated between the sisters of her lover, who soon lost all occasion to regret that their brother had made choice of the less-beautiful, but equally amiable Fanny : Mrs. Woodville cast an arch look towards Ellen, who was placed by the side of lord Edwin.

" This is a pleasure, my lord, that we did not look for," said she ; " it is, nevertheless, a most valuable one ; and my daughters have reason to be proud of the dowager marchioness's condescension, in allowing a son of hers to become their protector."

" Whatever might have been my own wishes," modestly replied lord Edwin, " I should not have ventured to obtrude myself on your hospitality and kindness, had not my mother's commands sanctioned me to do so. My uncle, likewise, thought that it was only paying you, my dear madam, a proper respect, for one of the family to conduct Miss Woodville home ; and it fortunately fell to my lot
to

to be so honoured. Caroline was with difficulty prevented from coming with us; but my mother, as she has been indisposed lately, persuaded her to give up her intention. They all begged me to say that they shall expect Miss Ellen to-morrow."

"She is ready to attend them;" said Mrs. Woodville; "though I could have wished, my lord, that we might have been permitted to enjoy your society, and that of Mr. Courteney, for a few days at least."

"You are very good," replied his lordship; "but my uncle is desirous of setting out immediately for the Castle: I assure you, we all sincerely regret that it was necessary for Miss Woodville to return."

"The dowager marchioness," said Courteney, "commissioned me to express her thanks at your readiness to oblige lady Caroline; and she trusts that this winter she shall have the pleasure of seeing you and your daughters at her house in town."

Dinner

Dinner was now announced, which gave a turn to the conversation; but lord Edwin had taken care to inform Ellen of the happiness he felt in being allowed to escort her to his family, and had drawn from her a confession that his presence had agreeably surprised her.

After dinner, they all walked to sir Godfrey's, where they passed the remainder of the evening. Ellen, however, on her return home, took her harp, and played and sang to Fanny the sweet airs which she had learnt from Stella and Jessy Maxwell. Lord Edwin listened to her with rapture; "Surely," thought he, "were my uncle to behold Ellen at this moment, and to hear the magical tones of her voice, he would not refuse to raise her to an equality with himself; he would consent to my marrying this sweet girl, in preference to Clarissa Beaumont, with all her fortune."

Ellen was glad to retire with Fanny to their own chamber, where they sat up
conversing

conversing the best part of the night ; each had so many things to communicate to each other, that the morning was far advanced before they thought of taking their accustomed repose.

Mrs. Woodville and Courteney remained for some time alone in the parlour ; Ellen was one of the principal subjects of their conversation. She was on the eve of quitting a second time her home ; and her stay would most probably be for three months. The heart of Mrs. Woodville was filled by maternal tenderness ; and she could not avoid pouring forth a part of it to the attentive Courteney, who thought it requisite *again* to repeat that he should consider Ellen as placed under his immediate protection, and would act towards her with the same care and attention as if she were really his child.

This solemn assurance satisfied the tender mother of Ellen, who fearlessly confided in all that the hypocrite uttered.

“ I shall

"I shall send with Ellen," said Mrs. Woodville, "a young person who has attended on my daughters since our residence here. She is a steady confidential woman, and one that is worthy to be placed about so young a girl as my Ellen; her morals are incorruptible, and her education has been above the common."

Courteney felt a little mortified by this intelligence; he had hoped that Ellen would have been unattended, and therefore more completely in his power. It therefore became necessary for him to be still more circumspect in his actions; the servant of Ellen must now be gained over to his side, before it was possible for his plan to be put into execution.

Dora Louvaine came to breakfast with them the next morning, and to deliver letters to Ellen for the young marchioness and lady Caroline. Drawing her towards one of the windows, she said, in a low voice—"Do not fail, dearest Ellen,

len, to write to me frequently; you may, perhaps, have many little things to communicate which may concern my sister, if you remain at the Castle as long as you expect. I know not why, but I have taken it into my head that Jemima and the marquis will not be the happiest couple in the world; she is naturally of a jealous disposition; and I am mistaken if her husband does not very shortly give her reason to suspect his fidelity. You must excuse me, Ellen, from explaining any further; but as you love me, let me beg that you will not conceal from me any thing that concerns the peace of my sister."

Ellen promised to comply with the request of Dora, though she did not for a moment believe that the marquis was addicted to gallantry. She then hastened to the extended arms of her mother, who held her for some minutes to her bosom; then kissing her blooming cheek, she gave her hand to Courteney, with a look which he well understood. Pressing it

to his polluted lips, he led her to the carriage which was in waiting, followed by lord Edwin and the two female attendants.

Thus did Mrs. Woodville innocently entrust her lovely daughter to the care of one of the basest and most profligate of human kind. She was a stranger to any of those presentiments of evil which are sometimes the forerunners of misfortunes; and she therefore saw her child leap gaily into the travelling coach of the marchioness, without feeling the slightest foreboding of the perils that awaited her, or the deep and deadly enemy into whose hands she was now committed.

Courteney, with the calm and placid air of unaffected piety, placed himself next Ellen; his brow was unruffled—his eye was tranquil; but his heart throbbed violently as the carriage drove rapidly away with the inestimable treasure which he had predestined as another of his victims.

times. He cast a malignant glance towards the enamoured lord Edwin, and determined that through *his* means the ruin of Ellen should be accomplished.

CHAP. VII.

THE arrival of Ellen at lady Beaumont's gave infinite pleasure to the marchioness and lady Caroline ; the latter of whom, embracing her kindly, said—" I shall live again, now that you are returned to us, my dear Ellen ; already I begin to feel the exhilarating influence of your happy countenance. Jemima has had a return of her low spirits, and Clarissa has grown quite dull and mopish ; I cannot tell what to think of them. Your sister Fanny is a charming girl ; but she does not possess your blissful spirits. I assure
you,

you, without any flattery, that every individual of our family has longed for your return."

Ellen felt much gratified by the affectionate reception she met with, particularly from Lord Mortimer, who kissing her cheek, said gaily—"My lovely little friend, it is *now* I feel that age has still some valuable privileges; since it authorizes me to give, and you to receive, without blushing, what these young men, I am sure, are envying me.—Speak, boys," continued the earl; "do you not wish yourselves in my situation?"

"There can be no doubt of that, my lord," said young Beaumont; "the privilege you boast of is indeed so great a one, that I almost wish myself arrived at your time of life, that Miss Woodville might honour me with the same inestimable favour."

"Well said, Adolphus!" cried lady Caroline.

Caroline goodnaturedly ; “ I think gallantry can go no farther than this ; and Ellen may now consider herself as the very paragon of all earthly perfection, since a gay and accomplished cavalier, like Adolphus Beaumont, has wished himself an old man, that he might enjoy the *supreme felicity of inhaling her balmy breath, and kissing her ruby lips.* Come with me, Ellen ; I shall have you completely spoiled ; and my uncle is even more to blame than Adolphus.”

She now hurried Ellen out of the room into her own chamber, where she began to inquire eagerly concerning Dora Louvaine and James Woodville.

“ I have great hopes,” said she, “ that sir Godfrey will raise no obstacles to their union. It would grieve me to the soul if I thought that any thing would occur to separate your brother and Dora : they seem so truly attached to each other, that in my eyes it would be an
actual

actual crime to prevent their marriage; and I think sir Godfrey is too liberal in his sentiments, and too fond of your family, to wish it."

"I have no fears myself," replied Ellen; "but James, I know, is frequently under great apprehensions lest sir Godfrey should very naturally desire to see Dora as well established in life as her sister."

"Rank and power are two charming things, I own," cried lady Caroline; "and might guide me in every affair but the choice of a husband; in that, Ellen, I tell you very frankly, I should consider alone the feelings of my heart. If I loved a man, it would be sufficient for me that he was a gentleman, and that he preferred me to all the world; I would marry him, if he did not possess a guinea."

Ellen smiled.

"Ah, you may smile; but I assure
you

you what I have uttered are my real sentiments; and I am greatly mistaken if you do not think as I do."

"I have never thought much, if at all, on the subject," replied Ellen; "but in the choice of a partner for life, I should certainly not be guided by interest."

"You have not deceived me," said lady Caroline; "and yet there is a certain air, an indefinable something about you, Ellen, that convinces me you were born to move in a higher sphere than that which you have just quitted. *Apropos*, my dear girl; there are plenty of gipseys who stroll about the woods near the Castle in summer, and you and I will positively have our fortunes told when we get there."

Ellen now laughed aloud—"Dear lady Caroline, you are too sensible, I am sure, to put the slightest confidence in any thing they might tell you."

"Why, really I should be loth to believe their almost unintelligible and non-sensical

sensical jargon; but I have often longed for an opportunity to hear what they would tell me, and I shall have an excellent one, now that we are together. Clarissa has such a dread of them, that she would run ten miles to avoid the sight of one; she therefore will not be of our party; but, if it were possible, I would give the world to get Courteney to walk with us through the wood, when they are there. Oh, how delightful it would be to see my pious preceptor turn up his hands and eyes to Heaven, at their prophane discourse! if you will second me, Ellen, we will absolutely make the gipseys tell his fortune."

Ellen, who highly enjoyed an innocent piece of mischief, promised to do all in her power to gratify lady Caroline, who hugged her in her arms.

"You are the best girl in the world," said she, "and suit my disposition even better than Clarissa; she is a terrible coward, and has often deprived me of
many

many a good laugh, because she was afraid of her mother's finding us out. My uncle means to set off for the Castle in a couple of days, and then, Ellen, you and I will have some delicious strolls together."

On the day appointed by lord Mortimer, his sister and the earl St. Laurence, and all their family, accompanied by lady Beaumont, her son and daughter, and a numerous train of domestics, arrived late in the evening at Mortimer Castle. Courteney exultingly seized the hand of Ellen, and conducted her into the large and magnificent saloon, where she was again welcomed by its noble owner, who placed himself between her and his niece.

"Caroline, my dear girl, you and Clarissa are no strangers here, but Miss Woodville is at present; therefore, I consign her to your care and affection, to make this abode, if possible, as pleasing to her as her own home."

As they were all much fatigued by the length and rapidity of their journey, for they always travelled post, the ladies retired early to their chambers ; and Ellen gladly followed lady Caroline, who insisted upon conducting her to those which were made ready for her reception.

It happened that the suit of apartments which had been allotted to Ellen were those which once belonged to the beautiful and unfortunate daughter of lord Mortimer. A venerable-looking woman, apparently about sixty years of age, was assisting Naomi, the attendant of Ellen, to place some of her things in order.

“ Ah, Mason !” cried lady Caroline, shaking her affectionately by the hand, “ how glad I am to see you look so well ! how have you been since I last saw you ?”

“ Better than usual, I thank your ladyship, and rejoice to see you and all the family returned to the Castle ; will you give me leave to attend you to your room ?”

“ No,

"No, I am obliged to you, Mason; and let me beg that you do not fatigue yourself. We are a large party this time; but you must make the young woman act for you. I don't like to see you do any thing but give orders."

"Your ladyship is very good," replied Mrs. Mason; "I seldom do any thing else now, for I am fortunate in having those about me whom I can depend on. But my lord desired these apartments to be got ready; and I have never suffered any one to go into the countess's bedroom but myself."

Then turning to Ellen, who was particularly struck by her appearance, she said respectfully—"You need not be afraid, madam; although the rooms have not been occupied by any of the family, yet the beds are perfectly well aired, as I have attended to them myself for many years."

She then withdrew, after having first

inquired if she could be of any service to Ellen ?

“ That is one of the best old creatures in the world,” said lady Caroline ; “ and should you be at all indisposed, you will find her a most pleasing companion. She has lived ever since she was quite a girl in my uncle’s family, as nurse and confidential friend of the late countess, whose history is a melancholy one : I will tell it you some other time—God bless you, my dear Ellen ; I hope you will sleep soundly to-night.”

“ No fear of that,” replied her fair friend ; “ I am weary with my journey, and shall not need the aid of any soporific.”

Lady Caroline now quitted Ellen, who was preparing to undress, when Mrs. Mason again entered, and brought with her some cake and warm wine and water, which she respectfully offered Ellen.

“ I hope, madam, you will not be offended,” said she ; “ but I thought you
looked

looked pale and fatigued ; this, I know, will do you good."

Ellen, with her natural fascinating sweetness, took the wine ; and thanking her for her kind attention, said—" I shall rely upon your word, Mrs. Mason, that the rooms are aired. Perhaps it was fancy, but I felt a sudden chill come over me the moment I entered them."

" Indeed you may trust me," replied the faithful nurse of the sainted Althea ; " for I saw to the airing of them myself. They belonged to the late countess, my dear and ever-to-be-lamented young lady ; and since her death, I have, till very lately, passed the chief of each day in these chambers, which to me are sacredly dear. I have often slept in her bed ; which none of the family but myself would ever do ; that which your maid is to occupy, in the small chamber which opens into yours, was formerly mine."

Ellen, although a stranger to fear, nevertheless felt gratified at having Nao-

mi so near to her. The gloomy grandeur of the rich crimson velvet bed, which she now prepared to repose herself, the superb furniture which was to match it, the lofty ceiling fretted with gold, and the monotonous dash of the waves against the walls of the Castle beneath her windows, for a moment inspired her with awe. Recommending herself to the protection of the Almighty, she soon, however, sunk into a calm and undisturbed slumber, from which she was only awakened late the next morning by the voice of lady Caroline, who eagerly inquired how she had rested?

“Never better, I assure you,” said Ellen, springing out of bed, and hastily retiring to her dressing-closet. “What, dear lady Caroline, is there in these rooms that should make you doubt the soundness of my repose?” was the question of Ellen, as she re-entered her bedroom.

“The silly stories that I have heard respecting

respecting them, I imagine," replied her ladyship. " They say that they are haunted by the unquiet spirit of the young countess ; but I dare say it is all nonsense. I have often wished to sleep here myself, and would have asked to have these rooms, but my mother always seemed averse to my entering them ; and I was afraid to mention my wish to the earl, as he is still tender on the subject of his daughter's death. Look, Ellen, how glorious the sun appears playing on the water below ! and how grand that range of high hills in the distance !—But come, let us hasten to the breakfast-parlour, where we are expected."

Ellen, attired in a simple muslin robe, which concealed the transparent whiteness of her neck and bosom, a lace cap, with a small white satin flower in front, and a countenance beaming with health and happiness, now joined the family that were assembled in the breakfast-room. All inquired how she was, with

an interest that spoke the regard she had inspired; all except Clarissa Beaumont—hers was the only face on which the least trait of discontent could be seen.

On lord Mortimer's face a cast of sorrow was visible, occasioned by the remembrance of *her* who had last occupied the suit of red chambers. It however soon gave place to the pleasure which the animated presence of Ellen Woodville never failed to inspire, as he asked her to accompany him over the grounds of the Castle, intimating at the same time, that he should be glad to be joined by any of the party who might feel the same inclination to ramble.

The light and buoyant spirits of Ellen were enchanted by the bold and romantic scenery around; she leaned on the arm of lord Edwin, and then on that of the earl, listening to each with different sensations of delight. For lord Mortimer she felt a veneration that bordered on filial love, and that gave to her manner

ner an air so highly interesting whenever she addressed him, that the earl confessed to Courteney he had seldom felt so strong a prepossession in favour of any one, as he now did for Ellen Woodville.

This was precisely what Courteney did not wish to happen ; yet he dared not check the feelings of lord Mortimer, lest he should excite his suspicions ; and he trusted, nevertheless, that his plot would succeed, notwithstanding the love which all the family evidently bore her. To lord Edwin he now adopted a different mode of conduct. He listened with seeming sympathy to his constant regrets that Ellen was less nobly descended than himself—he even pitied him ; and every now and then, as he saw occasion, threw out faint hopes that Ellen might be his.

To fix, if possible, more firmly the growing partiality of his pupil, Courteney purposely contrived opportunities for lord Edwin to converse with Ellen. He had soon, however, two formidable

spies to guard against, which he had not foreseen, but which he determined to make use of to his own advantage. These were the marquis of Wilmington and Clarissa Beaumont. The former, conscious that he felt more for Ellen than was consistent with the feelings of a husband, was ever on the watch lest the eyes of any of the party, of Courteney in particular, should discover what he most sedulously wished to conceal. He was well acquainted with his brother's love for Ellen ; but he had never encouraged him to hope, well knowing that his uncle had intended him for Miss Beaumont, who was a girl of large fortune and great connexions, being niece to an earl, and grand-daughter to the duke of *****.

The severity of lord Mortimer's conduct towards the lovely countess of Brandon was well known to his nephews, and gave them no hope that they would be treated with more lenity, should they disregard his advice. The marquis had
therefore,

therefore, out of pure regard for his brother, always counselled him to check every idea that might delude him into a belief of his uncle's consent being obtained.

The marquis also considered it as his duty to entreat Courteney to use every persuasion to convince lord Edwin that he could never become the husband of Ellen Woodville, without forfeiting the favour of lord Mortimer, and consequently disobliging all his relations. It however occurred to the watchful eyes of the marquis, that his tutor rather encouraged than repressed the partiality of his brother ; and he took an opportunity of mentioning his suspicions to Courteney. The wily hypocrite artfully got over the fears of the marquis.

“ All that mortal reason could suggest,” said he, “ I have brought forward to convince lord Edwin of the fatal consequences which must inevitably arise from his

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giving

giving way to this imprudent passion. I am, however, consoled by some secret information, which I received from good authority, that the affections of Ellen are unchangeably fixed on a brother officer and intimate friend of Theodore Woodville. This I beg, my lord, may not transpire; I mention it to you, because it affords me the only hope we have left of lord Edwin being saved from the heavy displeasure of his uncle."

This intentional falsehood of Courteney gave a negative kind of satisfaction to the marquis; he rejoiced to hear that there was a chance of his brother being in time brought back to a sense of the grateful obedience he owed his uncle; yet he felt an awkward sensation on being told that the heart of Ellen was already disposed of. Had he been single, he would not have hesitated for a moment to follow the dictates of his inclination; and regardless of the frowns of

his uncle, or the reproaches of his relations, he would have offered his hand and heart to Ellen Woodville.

To have gained her for his mistress, the marquis would joyfully have sacrificed half his estates ; but there was a purity about the mind and manners of Ellen, notwithstanding the gaiety of her spirits, that checked every improper thought ; and he now, for the first time in his life, repented of the hasty and impatient nature of his own disposition, which had hurried him into his recent indissoluble bondage.

Clarissa Beaumont was too much attached to lord Edwin not to perceive, with eagle eyes, his silent adoration for Ellen. She had remarked it to lady Caroline, but her ladyship only laughed at her jealousy, and made light of her fears.

“ Take pattern by me, Clarissa,” said she gaily ; “ I am as much interested for Adolphus as you can be for my brother ; yet you do not see me look cross or sad
at

at the many compliments which he pays to Ellen. I know very well that she is infinitely more handsome than I am; and I feel, that were I a man, it would be impossible for me to associate with so lovely a girl, and not acknowledge my sense of her superior attractions. Adolphus will not esteem me the less for the license I allow him; on the contrary, if he really loves me, he will be pleased at my good-nature, which is never disturbed by the attentions I see him pay daily to my little friend. Dear Clarissa, you are a girl of excellent understanding—excellent heart; do as I do—let the young men pay to Ellen's charms all the homage they deserve; keep your own countenance free from envy or discontent; and I will answer for it, they will not be ungrateful for our generosity."

Clarissa heard the advice of lady Caroline with a tearful eye; she could not, however, follow it; she longed for a confidant who would sympathize in her feelings,

ings, and pity, not laugh at her distress. Courteney appeared the being best calculated to console her; and she therefore scrupled not to disclose to him her apprehensions concerning the loss of her lover.

The tutor of lord Edwin caught at the dissatisfaction of Miss Beaumont; it afforded him another ray of hope—another auxiliary to work the ruin of *her*, he once idolized. He therefore listened to the fond complaints of Clarissa, with all that sympathizing attention and kindness which she wished for; lamented artfully that his dear pupil had ever been introduced to the fascinating syren, whom he suspected to be, notwithstanding the innocence of her looks, well skilled in the deepest dissimulation; and he added, with a sigh, that he feared she would not only destroy the happiness of Miss Beaumont, but fatally injure the peace of an amiable and unsuspecting object, who had ho-
noured

noured her with her friendship and affection.

Clarissa, surprised, begged him to explain ; and Courteney, having obtained her solemn promise of secrecy, confessed that he alluded to the marchioness, whose husband was too evidently seduced by the beauty of Ellen. He also glanced at the notice young Beaumont paid her; and hesitated not to affirm that Ellen was a coquette at heart—that she was proud, ambitious, and artful, and that he made no doubt, if something was not speedily done to prevent it, she would either entice lord Edwin or Mr. Beaumont into a marriage. If foiled in this, she might console herself by estranging the marquis from his wife, and occasion an eternal separation between them.

Miss Beaumont, shocked and alarmed, at first discredited the duplicity of Ellen Woodville. She had never attributed to her any fault, but only regretted that lord Edwin too evidently preferred his
new

new friend to an old one. Such a character, coming from the lips of a man she had always been taught to reverence, as an example of truth and justice, candour and self-denial, could not fail of having its due effect on the mind of Clarissa. She at first lamented that so beautiful an exterior as that of Ellen Woodville should conceal so base a soul; but pity soon gave way to a rooted aversion; and as she dared not confide in lady Caroline or the young marchioness, she conversed more frequently with Leopold, often taking his arm in preference to any other, that she might, without fear, give vent to her feelings and her regrets.

This conduct of Miss Beaumont at first surprised lady Caroline and the rest of her friends; but as the selection of her companion reflected great credit upon herself, she was suffered to walk with Courteney, and to converse with him without remark. Lady Caroline, it is
true,

true, smiled whenever she met them together; and sometimes inquired if she was learning how to compose *sermons*, for the benefit of the rising generation? laughed at the grave reproachful air of Courteney, and passed on.

Lord Edwin, however, rejoiced at this whim of Miss Beaumont, and felt doubly grateful to Courteney, whom he believed to have so contrived it, to facilitate his private intercourse with Ellen. The liberty he now enjoyed of walking out daily with the adored object of his first and tenderest affections, gave an air of animation to the handsome features of lord Edwin that increased his resemblance to Theodore Woodville; yet in the powers of mind and soul, he fell short of *him* for whose sake he was so dear to Ellen. Weak and irresolute, yet possessed of the most engaging disposition, and the most benevolent and affectionate heart, he was an easy tool in the hands of his infamous preceptor, who
secretly

secretly governed him in all things, and who had therefore the power to make his very virtues the instruments of his infernal machinations.

Courteney had always sought to give his too-yielding pupil a bad idea of women in general ; he affirmed them to be creatures swayed by interest, vanity, and self-love ; and declared that, were it not necessary that a man of his rank and fortune should have a legitimate heir to both, he would certainly advise him never to marry, as marriage was the grave of love.

As it was requisite, however, to make such a sacrifice, he seriously advised him to obey the desire of his uncle, marry Miss Beaumont, and indemnify himself for this proof of his obedience, by keeping, unknown to his family, the woman whom he loved.

“ I cannot,” said Leopold, “ give you a higher or more convincing specimen of my regard than by entrusting you
with

with my opinion ; were it known, it would for ever ruin my character. My affection for your lordship has drawn this counsel from me, which it would be dangerous, in the present state of society, to make public : I nevertheless affirm, that you need not despair of gaining all that you so ardently wish for."

Lord Edwin sighed, and cast a look of incredulity on the base and cowardly traducer of Ellen.

"Time and opportunity, love and flattery, perform wonders," continued Leopold ; "Ellen Woodville will not long be able to resist your tenderness ; already I have discovered that you are not indifferent to her ; but you must be cautious how you alarm her virgin delicacy ; an offer of making her your mistress would inevitably ruin all, and you would lose her for ever. You must first secure her affections, beyond her own power of retracting them ; then, my lord, I leave it to your ingenuity to discover the favourable

avourable moment, when, softened by her own feelings, warmed by the ardour of her lover's, and thrown off her guard, she may become yours, without your seeming to have planned it so."

"And are these alone the terms on which I must obtain my adored Ellen?" said lord Edwin; "must I become a villain, the base destroyer of that heavenly innocence which I admire? no, Courteney, no, I will not purchase my bliss at so dear a price!"

"Your lordship may do as you think proper," replied his *worthy* tutor; "I must now leave you, to walk with Miss Beaumont, whose affection, ever on the watch, requires all my prudence to keep tranquil."

Courteney, in fact, began to find that the business he had embarked in was of no trifling kind. He had to study the looks and actions of the several persons whom he was now deceiving. To Ellen he maintained the same paternal kind-

ness, whenever they were alone ; in company, he was what he had ever appeared to be, modest, humble, and devout ; to the marquis he seemed the steady friend of all the family ; to Clarissa the tender confidant of all her fears, all her sorrows, the man whose generous pity would lead him to risk a great deal to restore to her her lover, and to preserve that lover from the resentment of his uncle and his relations,

To lord Edwin he appeared in the most affectionate point of view ; since, to ensure his happiness, he had voluntarily betrayed opinions, and given him advice, which, if known, would ruin him in the estimation of lord Mortimer, his patron and friend.

Courteney had thus far hazarded his good name, his present comforts, and future indemnifications for all past toils and fatigues ; he had gone too forward to retreat were he so inclined—but this was not the case. Once he had passionately

ately loved the innocent object of his present malice, no sacrifice would then have been too great to procure the entire possession of her heart, to call her *his* for ever: disappointed in this, his love decreased, and in proportion to its ardency, so was his hate.

The ruin of Ellen Woodville was, he considered, the *chef d'œuvre* of all his crimes; and to accomplish it, he resolved to sacrifice, if necessary, all his future prospects; trusting, however, to the gratitude of lord Edwin, who at least would secretly provide for him, should he lose the countenance and favour of his family, by an action which no friendship or affection could even palliate, much less justify.

There was, however, much to be done and much to be considered of, before the final success of his plans. Ellen was become more than ever the acknowledged favourite of lady Caroline and her uncle, and he well knew that it would be highly dangerous

dangerous to attempt to weaken the regard of the former.

Warm in her friendships, hasty in her temper, and too proud to be directed in her actions, lady Caroline was no subject to tamper with ; she loved Ellen dearly, and even Clarissa did not dare to hint at any thing in her presence that could be construed into disrespect for her friend and constant companion.

The marchioness was likewise much attached to Ellen ; yet, if necessary, Courteney thought it not impossible to weaken *her* regard ; naturally of a suspicious disposition, doting on her husband, and therefore jealous of any pointed attentions which he might bestow on any other woman, it would not be difficult to shake her confidence in Ellen's virtue and morality, could she but be convinced that she coquetted with the marquis, and listened to his gallantry with smiling satisfaction.

Clarissa Beaumont and lord Edwin
were,

were, however, the two principal agents whom he meant to employ in the ~~destruction of their~~ peace. Fearless of danger or duplicity, this lovely girl, whenever she received letters from her mother, eagerly ran to submit them to his perusal ; with a smile of innate happiness, of innocent affection, she would press his hand to her lips, on hearing him pay a just tribute to the tenderness of her parent ; then bound from him, to follow the footsteps of lady Caroline.

At other times, she would present him with a favourite flower, or a sketch of some wild scenery, that had attracted her attention during her morning strolls. They were always accompanied by some flattering compliment to his poetical taste, and by a look which would have disarmed the malignancy of *any* heart but his.

Courteney once, and once only, felt his bosom softened towards her ; she had given him one of James Woodville's let-

ters to read, in which his own name was mentioned in the most flattering terms; and it was evidently in answer to ~~some~~ encomiums of her own. Courteney, with his usual humility, declared himself unworthy such praise.

“ Oh, say not so,” replied Ellen, with the most engaging sweetness and simplicity; “ you deserve the regard of all who are so fortunate as to be acquainted with you; I can answer that you possess the love of every individual of my family.”

“ Have I *your love* also, Ellen Woodville?” inquired Courteney, pressing her soft hand with more warmth than usual.

“ Can you doubt it?” said she, modestly; “ your own merits, talents, and virtues, are such as cannot fail of ensuring the esteem of all with whom you associate;” then raising her sparkling blue eyes with magical animation from the ground, and looking confidently in his face, she continued—“ I must be the
most

most ungrateful of human beings not to love and reverence the man so venerated by my mother, and so kind to me."

The look, the air, the voice of Ellen thrilled through the soul of Leopold; the momentary softness, however, which he had given way to, was soon dispelled—his purpose remained unshaken. She would not be his: she might be the *mistress*, but she should never be the *wife* of another.

END OF VOL. III.

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